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HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

ONE HUNDREDTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

SOVIET ARMY DEFECTORS AND PRISONERS OF WAR FROM AFGHANISTAN

MARCH 23, 1988

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PUBLIC HEARING ON SOVIET ARMY DEFECTORS AND PRISONERS OF WAR FROM AFGHANISTAN

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 1988

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND
COOPERATION IN EUROPE,
Washington, DC.

The Commission met, pursuant to notice, in room B-318, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, at 10 a.m., Representative Steny H. Hoyer (Chairman) presiding.

In attendance: Commissioners/Representatives Don Ritter, Christopher H. Smith, Bill Richardson and Edward Feighan; Senator Frank Lautenberg.

Also in attendance: Mary Sue Hafner, deputy staff director and general counsel, Jane Fisher, senior staff consultant and John Finerty, hearing coordinator.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN HOYER

Chairman HOYER. We will call this hearing to order.

Today the Helsinki Commission is holding its third hearing on the subject of Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The Commission held its second hearing on Afghanistan in December 1985 at which time the Commission's Chairman, Senator Alfonse D'Amato had hoped that there would be no need for another such hearing.

It is now almost 2½ years later, and it is just possible that the Soviet Government is preparing to do what it should have done years ago: withdraw its troops and allow the Afghan people to determine their own future.

We are encouraged by recent statements coming from Moscow indicating a Soviet intent to leave Afghanistan regardless of the outcome of the current talks in Geneva between the authorities and the Government of Pakistan.

But as is usually the case, there is still unfinished business. Today the Commission will examine the situation facing Soviet soldiers who have been captured by or defected to the Afghan Freedom Fighters. Their fate has received little coverage in the Washington press. It has been reported that there are approximately 250 of these POW's. We know some of their names. Some have written letters to the West pleading for help in reaching freedom. At least 22 of them have died in tragic circumstances while being held by the freedom fighters.

Through the dedication of people like one of our witnesses today, others have managed to resettle in Europe and in North America, but as we will hear shortly, these cases represent but a trickle.

The ranking House minority member of the Helsinki Commission, Congressman Don Ritter, seated to my left, is the sponsor of a House resolution that calls upon the United States to establish a means to bring Soviet POW's out of Afghanistan and to the United States.

Our first witness today will be Senator Gordon Humphrey, a leading spokesman in the U.S. Senate on the issue of Soviet defectors in Afghanistan. Senator Humphrey served on the Helsinki Commission for 2 years and is, as everyone knows, a dedicated, tireless fighter for human rights.

Senator Humphrey will be followed by Ludmilla Thorne of Freedom House. Ms. Thorne has campaigned vigorously on behalf of the Soviet soldiers captured in Afghanistan and played a major role in bringing our next two witnesses to freedom in Canada.

Igor Kovalchuck and Sergei Busov are two former Soviet Army soldiers who defected to the mujahedeen.

We look forward to hearing of their personal experiences in Afghanistan and their thoughts on what can be done to help their comrades who are still there. Ms. Thorne will provide assistance in translation.

Representatives from the State Department have been invited to these hearings, but we are told that due to scheduling difficulties at this time, the individuals we invited were unable to testify. However, the Commission will submit questions to the State Department on issues discussed here and ask for written responses.

Also, the Helsinki Commission has received copies of a cable to the Geneva talks on Afghanistan from 10 former Soviet soldiers who served in Afghanistan and are now living in the West. This cable calls upon the negotiators to provide that Soviet POW's have a choice of either returning to the Soviet Union or going to a free country.

I am going to submit a text of this cable at this time for the record in this hearing.

At this time I would like to introduce for such statement as he would like to make in opening, Congressman Don Ritter of Pennsylvania, ranking Republican member of the House delegation.

STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE DON RITTER

Representative RITTER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank you for holding these hearings.

I would like to point out that the Helsinki Commission has held more open hearings on the Afghanistan situation than any other body in the Congress, including the House or Senate Foreign Affairs Committees. The Helsinki Commission has been a leader in bringing Afghanistan into the forefront of the debate.

The Helsinki Commission, I hope, will continue this tradition of supporting the Afghan fight for freedom and continue to be outspoken on the cause of human rights in Afghanistan, whether or not the Soviets are speaking about withdrawal.

The condition of Soviet defectors and POW's is, indeed, grave. The following is a quote from a letter written to President Reagan by Sergei Busov, a former Red army deserter who was brought to Canada in November 1986. It aptly describes the situation of many other Soviet prisoners still in Afghanistan.

> We have spent many sleepless, anxious nights together with mujahedeen. We have shared the last crumbs of bread and the last drops of water. Is it possible that after all of this, my friends and I are destined to live a life of anguish and suffering without freedom? Can it be that this is all we deserve?

Thank God, we have been able to bring Sergei Busov out, but there are so many more Sergei Busovs in Afghanistan.

Now more than ever it is critical that the United States work to establish a Soviet defector pipeline out of Afghanistan. In doing so, we increase the pressure on the Soviets to withdraw, and we will bring freedom to hundreds of young men who will most likely face punishment or death if they are forced to return to the Soviet Union.

In recent months, Soviet statements have suggested that the Soviet problem in Afghanistan, Gorbachev's so-called "bleeding wound," is in reality an American problem. The Soviets seem to be trying to make the world believe they cannot withdraw from Afghanistan because the United States and others are providing aid to the mujahedeen.

This premise is categorically wrong. There is no reason, short of wanting to insure the continued Soviet domination of Afghanistan, for cutting off U.S. assistance to the resistance or reducing U.S. pressure on the Soviets until the Soviets have withdrawn.

The correct premise for America and the West is the higher the cost, the sooner the Soviets will leave Afghanistan, not vice versa.

Our job now is to increase the pressure and continue to make it more costly for the Soviets to stay.

My resolution, H. Con. Res. 169, introduced earlier in this Congress, calls on the President to establish a program whereby Soviet defectors from Afghanistan who have come to the West will be put on the air to tell their former comrades in Afghanistan about Soviet atrocities and why they defected, and how they, too, could defect.

In addition, this resolution calls for a system to bring Soviet red army defectors in Afghanistan to the United States or the West, grant them political asylum, and help them make the transition to Western life.

The Soviet defector pipeline resolution is co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of over 60 House Members, ranging all across the ideological and political spectrum.

Having Soviet soldiers defecting in large numbers and telling their stories to the West will put substantial pressure on the Soviets to withdraw. Short of introducing new or improved weaponry, news of comrade defectors and the availability of asylum in the West beamed to Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan is probably the most effective way of increasing the cost of the Afghan war to the Soviets. Imagine the devastation to Soviet soldiers' morale as their former comrades condemn the Kremlin's actions and atrocities in Afghanistan. It is a software component to this war as opposed to simply concentrating on hardware.

And while Members of Congress are rallying in support of Soviet defectors, there has been talk that the State Department is not doing nearly as much, as the Soviets pressure the mujahedeen directly and indirectly through Pakistan into returning Soviet defectors as part of a withdrawal agreement. We must not allow this to happen. These young men and their families have suffered enough.

Yet in the absence of a strong U.S. voice to the contrary, we could easily see these young men placed in Soviet hands if a withdrawal became imminent. They could be the sacrifices.

To those who have argued that the establishment of a defector pipeline would be impossible to achieve or that the Soviets would never allow it or that the Pakistanis would be unwilling to go along, I say that this is untrue. And, I say that this is cowardly. If the United States can supply the mujahedeen with sophisticated military equipment, like Stingers, there is no reason to believe that a defector pipeline is beyond the realm of possibility.

The Canadian Government had established such a rescue operation, through which five Red army defectors were brought to Canada, largely with the assistance of the Senator from New Hampshire, Mr. Humphrey. However, it's my understanding that the Soviets then brought pressure to bear on the Canadians to do no more of the same.

Now is the time to establish a free flowing, Soviet defector pipeline. It will increase the cost of the war to the Soviets, and it will rescue the many, young, Soviet defectors of all nationalities who are crying out for freedom.

I welcome our witnesses and look forward to their testimony.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HOYER. Thank you.

Mr. Chris Smith, Congressman Smith of New Jersey.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH FROM NEW JERSEY

Representative SMITH. Our first witness, Senator Humphrey, is clearly one of the leaders in the Congress for the cause of freedom for the Afghanistan people. I think that his leading off the witnesses today is very appropriate. For a number of years, Senator Humphrey has pressed the administration and pointed out the disappointments with the administration's policy in Afghanistan. I look forward to his testimony, and I do want to welcome him here this morning.

Chairman HOYER. Thank you, Congressman Smith.

We are very pleased to have with us Senator Humphrey. Clearly, Senator Humphrey has been a leader on this issue, as I said at the outset, and throughout the last 6 to 7 years has demonstrated a greater interest than probably anybody in the U.S. Senate, indeed, perhaps in the country. He and Congressman Ritter have both been very much involved with, concerned about and committed to this issue.

Senator, we are very pleased to have you with us. I recognize you for whatever statement you would like to make at this time.

STATEMENT OF HON. GORDON HUMPHREY, U.S. SENATE

Senator HUMPHREY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I commend your prestigious Commission for holding this exceedingly important hearing. It is far more timely than I suppose you might think.

Specifically, I commend Congressman Ritter for spearheading this effort of the Commission.

Mr. Chairman, I will put it bluntly. Our country has failed miserably, failed miserably, to implement an effective, ongoing program to accommodate Soviet defectors. In 8 years of war, we have brought only six Soviet soldiers defecting in Afghanistan to this country, only six in 8 years, in the face of handwritten pleas directly addressed to the President of the United States from Soviet defectors requesting asylum.

This failure is scandalous. It is shocking. It is shameful. It is disgraceful. It is tragic. It is heart breaking. It is intolerable.

We who have struggled to secure asylum for Soviet defectors in Afghanistan have had some tiny success. Two of those success stories are sitting in this room today, but our successes have been terribly small as measured against the need.

The administration's stated policy on the issue of Soviet defectors from Afghanistan was outlined in a letter that I received from the State Department last week.

> Soviet soldiers who have chosen freedom should be given a chance to live in a free society rather than be returned against their will to the Soviet Union. We, therefore, will continue to make every effort to reach those defectors. Should there be a settlement of the Afghan question, we will do our very best to assure that Soviet prisoners are given the choice of repatriation or resettlement.

Mr. Chairman, in large measure that statement is sheer hypocrisy. It is nothing but blowing smoke. We have not even begun to make every effort to reach these defectors.

Since the beginning of the war, the United States has assisted in securing asylum for only 11 defectors, 6 in this country and 5 in Canada. Not a single Soviet defector in Afghanistan has been granted asylum in the West since 1986.

I am pleased to see that the Commission has invited Ludmilla Thorne of Freedom House to testify this morning. Ms. Thorne has single handedly fought a determined, courageous and principled battle against bureaucratic inertia and against the unwillingness of the State Department to do anything which might upset Moscow in her effort to secure asylum for Soviet defectors.

She has traveled inside Afghanistan four times, four separate occasions; has interviewed 22 Soviet soldiers in the hands of the Afghan resistance. Nine of the defectors that have been brought to the West owe their freedom literally, owe their freedom to the dedication and perseverance of Ms. Thorne. Truly she deserves a medal. We ought to be looking for some way to publicly honor this woman.

Were it not for she, in my view, not one defector, not one in my view, seeking asylum would have been accommodated.

Where we have had successes, they have been secured under extraordinary circumstances. For example, in May 1986, Ludmilla Thorne brought to me five handwritten letters from Soviet defec-

tors addressed to the President of the United States. The letters contained pleas for asylum.

I secured an appointment with President Reagan and handed him the letters directly. The President, thank goodness, took a personal interest, and through that personal interest, 6 months later, the five young men reached the West, and we are honored this morning by the presence in this room of two of those five: Sergei Busov and Igor Kovalchuk.

As you see, Mr. Chairman and members, they are fine, young men. They are real human beings. They are not an abstraction in a bureaucratic cable somewhere. They are real, live, human beings, and there are many more like them seeking asylum.

Over the past 8 months, I have personally transmitted the names of 18 Soviet defectors to the highest levels of our Government. We know them by name, where they are, and which group of the Afghan resistance is holding them.

In several cases we have letters from the resistance groups indicating their willingness to release the men. However, despite the urgency of this matter, and despite the information we have provided, there has been very little progress towards granting their request for asylum.

The simple fact of the matter remains. They have not yet, after all of these months, been granted asylum. They are still in the hands of the resistance.

Why? Certainly not because the President does not care or the Secretary of State. I think the explanation, rather, is twofold. First, the President's subordinates are so distracted by other emergencies, the job of rescuing Soviet defectors simply does not get done. It does not get done.

Second, in my view there are many in the State Department who do not want to do anything at this juncture which might offend the Soviets, and clearly the Soviets do not want the United States accommodating defectors. That is my view.

However, whatever the cost, the result is unacceptable, and time is growing short. We know where many of the defectors are. We know them by name. They should have been accommodated long ago. Let's get them out now, and no more excuses.

It is a fundamental matter of justice. These young men have made an extraordinary decision that involves personal sacrifice. It is unlikely they can ever go home again. It is unlikely they can ever see their families again. They deserve an active and aggressive and institutionalized effort on the part of our Government to secure the freedom that they seek.

At best, over the last 8 years of the war in Afghanistan, we have accommodated only a trickle of defectors seeking asylum. The effort has been sporadic and ad hoc. In 8 years there has been no institutional effort to provide asylum.

Without the exertions of Ludmilla Thorne, in my view there would have been no effort by our Government at all. Therefore, I urge the Commission to examine carefully the shameful failure of our Government to arrange asylum for Soviet defectors in Afghanistan.

I urge the Commission to call for an immediate accounting from the interagency task force on Soviet defectors.

Furthermore, I am calling for a GAO investigation of this matter, and I urge members of the Commission to join me in this request.

Mr. Chairman, we have an emergency on our hands. Unless we soon accommodate these defectors, it is virtually certain they will become pawns in a settlement of the war. It is virtually certain they will be forcibly repatriated.

Indeed, one of the spokesmen of the political groups has already stated that the men in the hands of that group might well be traded for resistance prisoners in the hands of the Government in Kabul.

What a stain on the honor of this Nation that such a travesty might happen, when officials at the highest levels of this Government are aware of these young men, many of them by name, asking for asylum. What a travesty it would be if we failed in our responsibility to these men. God forbid it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HOYER. Thank you very much, Senator. That statement, as your previous statements have done, I think very graphically not only express your opinion, but reflect your deep commitment to this issue and to human rights in general, which you demonstrated as a member of this Commission and continue to reflect.

Senator, let me ask you something. I do not know what your schedule is. I have got to leave, and very frankly, I would like to have the opportunity of hearing Ms. Thorne's testimony. Do you have the time—I know members will perhaps want to ask questions—to have Ms. Thorne testify and then ask questions?

Would that be all right with the members of the Commission? Senator, would that be all right with you?

Senator HUMPHREY. Perfectly, perfectly.

Chairman HOYER. At this time I would like to call Ludmilla Thorne to testify, and I appreciate her being with us and appreciate the work that she is doing.

I want to apologize to her. Immediately upon the conclusion of your statement, I will have to leave because I have two other hearings that I am supposed to be attending.

I thank the members of the Commission for accommodating me.

STATEMENT OF LUDMILLA THORNE, FREEDOM HOUSE

Ms. THORNE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, first of all, for inviting me to be here with you today. I am very excited and happy that you have given us a chance to be with you today.

The problem of Red army defectors and POW's in Afghanistan has been of profound concern to me during the past 5 years. More than that, it has haunted me, and at times I have felt utter helplessness and despair for those young men who at this very moment are in Afghanistan, hoping to be saved.

This is the third time that I have testified on this subject during the past 5 months. In early October 1987, I took part in a hearing sponsored by the Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan, and later that month, I testified before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Investigations regarding our Government's handling of Soviet and Eastern bloc defectors.

In addition to taking part in such public discussions of the problem, I have had countless private meetings since 1983 with various U.S. Government representatives, and on January 27 of this year, these efforts culminated in a private meeting with President Reagan.

During the past 5 years I have made four trips to Pakistan and Afghanistan, during which I interviewed 22 Soviet soldiers inside Afghanistan and in the border areas.

Because I was born in the Soviet Union and speak Russian fluently, they were able to describe to me in great detail and with profound emotion why they deserted and what they now hoped for.

Of the 22 men, 20 had deserted and 2 were captured. Nine of the Soviet Army defectors were eventually brought to the West, including Igor Kovalchuk and Sergei Busov, who, I am very happy to say, are here with us today, sitting behind me.

But the rest are still waiting inside Afghanistan, waiting to be rescued, if they are still alive today.

After each trip I brought out notes and photographs and letters from Soviet Army deserters, begging for asylum, and I have transmitted these to U.S. Government officials, but unfortunately, most of these asylum requests have gone by unanswered.

I have also described to our Government the terrible conditions under which some Soviet defectors in Afghanistan are being held, and I have pleaded for help again and again.

I have written many articles about the plight of Red army deserters in Afghanistan, which have appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Life magazine, Newsday, and in many other publications.

However, despite all of these efforts, the results have been very meager. So far, as Senator Humphrey has pointed out, the United States has granted asylum only to six Red army defectors, while in 1 year alone, 1985, 22 others were killed in Afghanistan and in the border areas during desperate attempts to escape or to gain asylum. I am truly ashamed of this, and I believe that it is not a good record for freedom loving America.

During the meeting with President Reagan this past January, in which Senator Gordon Humphrey, Red army defector Vladislav Naumov and I took part, we gave the President a list of 18 names of Soviet soldiers who want asylum in this country. The President received us with great sympathy and promised to exert his influence in bringing more of these men to America.

I am grateful to the President for his efforts. As a matter of fact, in most cases it was because of the President's personal intervention that some Soviet defectors, including the two who are with us today, have made their way to the West.

But why should we have to appeal to the President personally each time in order to get some positive results? For years we have recommended that a systematic method for screening, processing and transporting Red army deserters be devised, similar to the program that was set up by the Allies after World War II for Soviet red army defectors. After 5 years, however, no such mechanism has been set in motion for Afghan defectors.

One of the young men included in the list of 18, a young Ukrainian, wrote an extremely poignant letter to President Reagan in June of last year in which he said:

"What I saw in Afghanistan turned my brains inside out. I did not participate in combat operations, but what I saw was enough for me to understand . . . beginning with the zinc coffins and ending with the cynical stories told by Soviet pilots. . . . I had two choices,

He continued:

Either to close my eyes and pay no attention to everything that was happening around me . . . or leave. Mr. President, I did not desert because I wanted a pair of American blue jeans—I had them in the Soviet Union. But I left because I did not want people to refer to me as a "Russian Fascist." . . . I appeal to you that you grant me political asylum in the United States.

In the letter to me, he wrote:

Ludmilla, if you could only imagine how happy I was to read a letter with the green letterhead of "Freedom House." It is good to know that one is not alone and that total strangers know about you and are trying to help.

I transmitted both of these letters to American Government officials with a long cover memo dated July 30, 1987. A copy of a letter which I received from the mujahedeen resistance group that is holding the defector, in which they asked me to help arrange his transfer to the United States, was also attached.

On October 15, 1987, Senator Humphrey personally gave a copy of the letter of the army defector to President Reagan, and after that I conveyed to our Government the name of the defector's handler in the resistance group and his telephone number in Peshawar. In other words, we made everything as easy as possible for our Government to bring this Soviet Army defector out of Afghanistan.

Last week I called the resistance group in Peshawar that is holding this young man, telling them that I was still working on the case. I was told that in view of the fact that for nearly a year American Government representatives were not interested in bringing him out, they have now decided to exchange him for some of their own prisoners of war.

This new development shocked me, and I explained to the mujahedeen that should they do this he may be killed by the Soviets for the defector's anti-Soviet statements, excerpted from his letters, had been made public in the United States, and he also had given an interview to a British journalist in which he also condemned the Soviet Union's actions in Afghanistan.

My mujahedeen contact said that he would discuss this problem with the head of his party, and since that initial conversation on March 14, last week, I have called him several times. As a matter of fact, I called this group each day, once, twice, three times. I have spoken to them now a total of 17 times since last Monday, pleading that the young defector not be turned over to the Soviet side. I fully understand that the Afghan insurgents want to save their men as much as I want to save the Soviet defector.

The U.S. Government had nearly 8 months to bring this unfortunate young man to America, and now, if he is to be turned over to the Soviets and if he will be imprisoned or executed, who should bear the blame? I think the answer is very obvious.

I would add that since I have prepared this written testimony, I called again, last Monday, the mujahedeen group in question and spoke to my contact, and he said, "We have discussed this matter again with our leader, and we have relented. We have decided to

let him go your way." But he said, "and I have this on a tape; I taped the conversation with the mujahedeen contact." He said, "But now you must arrange his passage, and someone must contact me here at Peshawar."

And I asked him, "Has anybody from our Government contacted you so far?"

He said, "Nobody, nobody, absolutely nobody."

Now, this was this Monday, day before yesterday, 7 a.m. my time, 5 p.m. their time. As of 5 o'clock Monday, not a single government representative has contacted this man that I spoke to 17 times last week.

In February, Mikhail Gorbachev announced that he intends to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year. In principle, all of us surely welcome the thought, for it may lead to the end of the Afghan people's immense suffering.

But if a withdrawal agreement will be signed, I am terribly afraid that the Red army defectors in Afghanistan, of whom there are several hundred, will fall through the cracks. They may be totally forgotten in the complicated process, or worse still, the Soviet Union may demand that they be repatriated, or they may use the ploy of offering them for exchange, which, by the way, is something the Soviets have not wanted to do for 8 years.

For 8 years they did not want to exchange their defectors or their POW's for the mujahedeen POW's. Now, suddenly, as the withdrawal process begins, they are beginning to offer the exchange program. But I believe that Soviet defectors must have a choice. They cannot be simply repatriated or exchanged, and if that will happen, especially with this young man, I think this administration is going to have another Medvid case on their hands.

Let us not forget what happened to the hundreds of thousands of Russian, Ukrainian, and Cossack refugees, who were forced to be repatriated to the Soviet Union after World War II as a result of the Yalta agreement. They all faced a very terrible death.

I have a personal recollection of what it is like to live under the fear of being repatriated to the Soviet Union. My parents fled from the U.S.S.R. at the end of the war, like thousands of other Soviet citizens, and our family was among those which were scheduled to be sent back from a displaced persons camp in West Germany.

Luckily, my late father was able to forge our documents so that we were no longer Russian, but Latvian by nationality, and with these credentials, we arrived in the United States in late December 1949.

Consequently, as a very young child, I had to memorize a brand new autobiography. In school, in St. Louis, Missouri, in grade school, I had to tell everybody that I was Latvian, and God forbid that I should slip up or meet a real Latvian, who could reveal that I was not Latvian at all, since I did not speak a word of the language.

For 7 years my parents and I lived in fear of being found out and being repatriated back to the Soviet Union, and some friends of ours were, by the way. Until 1957, we had to hide the truth. We were terribly afraid of being found out.

Then we could come out and tell the truth without punishment. But for 7 years the fear of repatriation hung like a "sword of Damocles" over our head. I do not wish such an experience to anyone.

March 27, 1957, when my parents and I became American citizens, was one of the happiest days of my life. I want the Red army defectors in Afghanistan to have such an equally joyous day.

Thank you.

Chairman HOYER. Thank you very much, Ms. Thorne. We appreciate your testimony.

I am going to pass on questions and recognize our ranking member, Don Ritter, and I will be asking a member of our Commission, Bill Richardson, to chair the hearing. Again, I apologize, Senator and Ms. Thorne for having to leave. I want to stay and hear your testimony, however, I appreciate your being with us.

Mr. Ritter.

Representative RITTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Senator, for your excellent testimony.

Could we establish the difference between a defector who has escaped and seeks asylum elsewhere and a POW that is held against their will?

Ms. THORNE. Well, I think that, as I mentioned, I interviewed inside Afghanistan and in the border areas 22 young men. Twenty of them voluntarily defected to the mujahedeen. Two were captured. One was a young man called Nicholay Shevchenko, and he told me honestly that he had a baby in Kiev and a wife and that he was captured. He was eager to go home. He told me even if he had to spend 10 years in prison, he would rather spend 10 years in prison or whatever to be with his family, and that is understandable.

But, he said, in case it cannot be worked out, he nonetheless wrote an asylum request for this country.

Another young man, a Crimean Tatar, was captured, but as I spoke to him the second time—I spoke to him twice in 1983, during two different visits to Afghanistan—he wanted asylum in the United States, or some other country.

So to answer your question, the differentiation between a defector and a POW who was captured sometimes becomes very blurred, and I know that this young man, who was captured, desperately wants asylum. On the other hand, I know of two Red army defectors, who defected. But when I asked them, "What do you want to do now?" they said, "We want to go home."

And I said, "What will happen to you there?"

And they said, "We will be executed."

And I said, "Why don't you ask for political asylum?"

And they said, "What is that? What is political asylum?" They had never even heard of the term. They were just 19 years old.

When I explained to them that they could ask for permission to enter a Western country and not to be repatriated, then they started thinking about it, but they did not know the concept of political asylum. Many of these kids do not know.

But one of them nevertheless said, "I was born in the Ukraine, and I want to die in the Ukraine." So these differentiations are still blurred.

Representative RITTER. I think perhaps there is a differentiation when it comes to those who are being held as prisoners against their will, and who definitely want to go back, and those who have defected, who when captured definitely do not want to go back. The operative word here, I would suspect, is "choice."

Ms. THORNE. Definitely.

Representative RITTER. Senator, you talked about a GAO study. I think this is essential, and perhaps we in the Commission can assist in making a request for the study.

I think the timing of all of this is critical. If this is not settled in the next weeks, maybe days, it could be that these people end up as pawns.

Senator HUMPHREY. Indeed, they will be. There is no question, and the State Department seems to be taking the position that the matter is being covered in discussions with the Soviets about the treatment of defectors and prisoners of war after a settlement.

That is fine up to a point, but in the meantime, before a settlement is signed and effectuated, we ought to be doing our best on an urgent basis to exfiltrate as many of those who genuinely want asylum as possible. We ought to do this before any settlement goes into effect.

We have already wasted years. We have perhaps months or weeks left. We have an emergency. We need to act with no further excuses.

Representative RITTER. I agree, and I think that we have one case right here that Ludmilla Thorne has brought to our attention. This case is in critical condition, literally.

Senator HUMPHREY. Yes.

Representative RITTER. It is symbolic. It is awfully important because it sets the tone for what might happen to other defectors if this first one is exchanged for someone on the other side who is being held against their will, who is being tortured, who desperately wants to get back to the freedom fighters and free Afghanistan.

If we exchange a defector who does not want to go back to the Soviet Union, whose words have been taken down, they could be executed or tortured or imprisoned in a strict regime labor camp. I would like to request the Chairman and the Commission that we immediately contact the appropriate authorities in the State Department, taking further information from Ms. Thorne after the hearing; that we immediately become active on this particular case.

Senator HUMPHREY. May I just add something to that, Mr. Chairman?

You are quite right in another sense, as well. If one Soviet defector seeking asylum is repatriated involuntarily, is traded in any means, that will be taken as a sign that the United States is willing to acquiesce in those kinds of arrangements, and it will encourage further such trades.

Representative RITTER. I think in our relationship with the mujahedeen, they are our friends; they are our allies. But we have to be extraordinarily forceful here, and with the Pakistanis as well. We cannot allow this first case to happen because it will set an extremely bad example.

I would like to mention Henry Kriegle, who is here with the Committee for a Free Afghanistan, was not long ago in Afghanistan and came back with a letter from Dr. Mojahdedi, who is very active in the alliance, in the resistance groups. This letter supported the concept of a defector pipeline out of Afghanistan.

The mujahedeen are very interested in cooperating with the Americans and the Pakistanis or whatever it takes to bring these people out and to have them then transmit their own feelings and emotions and experiences back to Soviet soldiers inside Afghanistan.

Senator, do you have any comment on whether or not the timing, giving the Soviet-talk of withdrawal, is perfect for this or should we be holding back? What are your ideas?

Senator HUMPHREY. Holding back on what?

Representative RITTER. Holding back on doing things that could conceivably upset the Soviets.

Senator HUMPHREY. I think we have a clear-cut humanitarian duty to exfiltrate those who have requested asylum, period.

Representative RITTER. Ms. Thorne?

Ms. THORNE. I fully agree. I think the two issues should be kept separate. I think there is the whole, huge, complicated process of withdrawal of Soviet troops and all that goes with it, and separate from that, we have the 200 or so Red army defectors, including some officers.

We have been trying to get a certain officer out of Afghanistan for 5 years. Can you imagine? An officer, and this administration has done nothing to try to get him out even though the group that is holding him has told me, "Please take him."

The two elements should not have anything to do, with each other. We should exfiltrate defectors, and we should try to get a decent and honorable withdrawal agreement.

Senator HUMPHREY. May I just underscore something that was said a moment ago?

It is important for everyone to realize that the resistance are more than cooperative, more than anxious to release these men seeking asylum. They have been very cooperative.

Representative RITTER. You are familiar with H. Con. Res. 169, which the sitting chairman has co-sponsored. The political and ideological spectrum is covered in toto. Barnie Frank of Massachusetts was one of the original co-sponsors. John Conyers from Detroit, down to the hardcore conservatives are involved in this, and it reminds me of the support that Paul Tsongas and I were able to generate for the Tsongas-Ritter resolution that sought to provide (and was unanimously passed in the House and Senate) "effective assistance" to the Afghan Freedom Fighters.

What are your thoughts about establishing a defector pipeline? I mean with the idea in mind that the Soviets have not withdrawn, and now they are claiming that somehow the snafu in withdrawal is potentially the fault of the Pakistanis or the Americans?

Ms. THORNE. I believe that there is a reason why, now for the first time after 8 years, the Soviets are approaching, actively approaching, the active mujahedeen resistance groups, offering them to exchange the Red army defectors and POW's for mujahedeen POW's. I think the reason is very obvious.

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If the withdrawal will take effect, they do not want 200 or so Red army defectors, like Igor and Sergei, telling their story in the West about what this war was all about. As I said, I think this is a ploy to which we should not fall, and we must now get these young men out.

Representative RITTER. It is really not our responsibility, in other words, to protect the public relations arm of the Soviet Union from just retribution as to what they have done to brutalize the Afghan people. As a matter of fact, if there was any justice in the world courts, if there was any justice in the political, so-called "peace movement," the conditions in Afghanistan would be blazened across every newspaper in the world as the ultimate violation of peace and the removal of human rights from an entire nation.

Representative RICHARDSON. Before I recognize Congressman Smith, I understand Senator Humphrey has a pressing event he has to attend. So I would encourage my colleagues to finish our questions for him.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman.

Senator HUMPHREY. May I just say that there is nothing more pressing on my schedule today or this week or this year than this case, and I intend to stay as a witness or an observer for the entire proceeding.

Representative SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do have a number of questions.

I was intrigued, Ms. Thorne, by your comment that in speaking to some of the Soviet servicemen they were unaware of asylum, as to what that meant, how one could apply for it, and what the procedure for applying was.

First of all, it is my understanding that Radio Free Europe does broadcast into Afghanistan. To your knowledge, has there been any attempt made to explain to those Afghanistan, in particular, the men and women in uniform from the Soviet Army, what asylum is; if they do defect, what the possibilities are for them?

It seems to me that we are missing an opportunity if we are not doing that. Ms. Thorne and Senator Humphrey, perhaps you might want to address this issue?

Ms. THORNE. As far as I know, and we probably should ask Igor and Sergei because they know better than I; they were actual Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan, but I have information to the effect that very little Western broadcasting reaches these young men. When they are in the Soviet Army itself, they have very little chance to listen, and likewise when they are with the mujahedeen. So they really do not know.

As far as I know, we have not made any kind of concerted effort to let them know about the Geneva Convention or anything that goes with it.

Representative SMITH. It would seem to me that Radio Free Europe would be a good medium to utilize in this effort. Certainly there must be some R and R (rest and recreation). Soldiers cannot constantly be out in the field engaging the enemies, in this case the freedom fighters.

Senator HUMPHREY. There are certain ways to propagate this information, not the least of which is word-of-mouth among Soviet

soldiers themselves. If the word got out that asylum was available, it would travel fast, in my opinion.

I am not aware of any effort, concerted or diluted, to spread the word, any effort on our Government, and indeed, knowing what I know, I would be astounded if I found there were such an effort.

Representative SMITH. Mr. Chairman, there are representatives from Radio Free Europe coming to this hearing. I hope that the United States would make a concerted effort to get the message out. As you indicated, Ms. Thorne, it is important that the soldiers know details of the Geneva Convention protections, as well as the possibility of asylum if it is, indeed, sought.

I have a few other questions, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Humphrey, who specifically on our side is responsible for not bringing the 18 defectors and presumably many others to America? Obviously President Reagan and Secretary Shultz are in the loop, but there are people who are on the scene day-to-day. Who is making these decisions? Could either you or Ms. Thorne tell us who these individuals are, either now or for the record, so that we can try to overcome some of these obstacles?

Senator?

Senator HUMPHREY. Well, angry as I am about this travesty, I am not going to point my finger at any individual at this point. I think that perhaps a GAO investigation could more credibly do that. The problem is institutional. The problem is that there is no one in charge of our Afghanistan effort, no one in charge of an institutionalized effort to accommodate those seeking asylum. It is an institutional problem.

The only time we have succeeded is when we've brought the matter to the attention of the President. We should not have to do that. There should be an institutionalized effort, and the need is all the more urgent.

We no longer have years in this matter. We have, at most, months, perhaps just weeks, to succeed.

Representative SMITH. You would agree that it cannot wait until the GAO has completed its investigation.

Senator HUMPHREY. Indeed not.

Representative SMITH. That interagency task force that you referenced, is that not viable? Is that not functioning effectively?

Senator HUMPHREY. Well, it is an ex officio body, and obviously there are certain limitations. So it would not serve in this case.

Ms. THORNE. I would like to say I would concur with Senator Humphrey.

Representative SMITH. Sure.

Ms. THORNE. As angry as I am, I had two conversations late last evening with two people who should have been working on this case, but I feel that privately, I will be very glad to discuss with you who was involved, but publicly I do not mean to cause these individuals harm or embarrassment. I just want the project to be done, and I prefer to give you the names privately.

Representative SMITH. Thank you.

Ms. Thorne, who besides yourself at Freedom House has access to Soviet prisoners of war? Does the ICRC still have access or has that been stopped?

Ms. THORNE. The ICRC program ended. They brought regular army deserters and captured young men to Switzerland for a period of 2 years of interment at a prison facility, but a lightly guarded prison facility.

Out of the 11 men, 1 young man, immediately, literally escaped from the prison facility in Switzerland to West Germany. His name is Yury Vashchenko.

Another young man, Yury Povarnitsyn, asked for political asylum. These two refused to be repatriated, and the others went back.

The problem with the ICRC program, as I see it, is twofold. No. 1, the Red Cross, when they bring the young men to Switzerland for 2 years of interment before repatriation, they do not give these young men a choice. They allow only for Soviet diplomats, who are KGB agents, to visit them in their cells.

I had several meetings with Red Cross officials, asking whether at least some letters that we wrote to the soldiers, private letters, would be transmitted. They refused to accept these letters.

So they were brainwashed during these 2 years, saying, "Come home. Everything is going to be fine. Momma and daddy are waiting for you."

Thus, two of the young men asked for political asylum. Some of the others who returned are known to be in labor camps.

As I said, they must be given a choice, but they must also be given information. They should be told what may happen to them if they return. Nickolay Ryzhkov was a young man who returned and is now serving a 12-year strict-regime labor camp sentence in Mordovian Labor Camp No. 3-5. Nickolay lived in my mother's house for the first 6 weeks. We told him, and all his friends told him, what may happen to him if he returns to the U.S.S.R. At least he was informed.

But the Red Cross repatriots were not informed what may happen to them. I think once they are informed, they are free young men. They should make their own choice.

Representative SMITH. Thank you. One final question, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Humphrey, what specifically is being asked in your GAO request? Could you make that request a part of this record?

Senator HUMPHREY. I do not have it with me. I am not sure, frankly, if it has even been written, but I will be asking for a complete investigation of this matter to find out what the problem is, and if necessary, to assign blame. But that is likely to be a post-mortem effort, if you will.

We do not have time, nor do we need to wait. We know what the problem is. We know what the need is. We know what the remedy is. What we need is the will to do it, and that is what is lacking.

Representative SMITH. Thank you.

Ms. THORNE. Could I just say one thing? I would like to urge each person here to please try to help us at least with the case of this one young man.

I have the letters here, the letters from this young man who may be exchanged. After calling this particular mujahedeen group and particular resistance representative at the particular phone

number all week, someone from the Government's side must followup my telephone calls.

As a private person I have done everything I can. My efforts have stopped. Now, as of Monday night no one in Peshawar has yet contacted this mujahid. I plead with you. I can give you his phone number, his name. Someone besides myself must try to contact him. Otherwise they will change their mind again and say, "Look at the Americans. We are not going to wait another 8 months. We are going to exchange him."

This is an SOS.

Representative RICHARDSON. Without objection, if you would like, we can insert that in the record, and I will consult with the chairman. Perhaps this Commission can initiate that effort. I think that would be the most appropriate thing.

Ms. THORNE. Thank you.

Senator HUMPHREY. Mr. Chairman, I feel moved to say a word on that point. I have been informed that on Tuesday, finally, after 8 months and after a letter which I transmitted to the White House on Friday threatening to blow this case wide open unless something is done soon about this specific individual; on Tuesday, finally, a contact was made.

Representative RICHARDSON. I commend the gentleman for his commitment and persistence on this issue and his leadership.

The gentleman from Ohio.

STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE EDWARD FEIGHAN FROM OHIO

Representative FEIGHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Thorne, I very much admire the courage and determination that you have brought to this issue. I know that we will be able to hear from you further when the two former Soviet soldiers testify, and I look forward to hearing from you then very much.

Senator, I am curious about your thoughts regarding the role that the Pakistanis have played already and what we can expect or should expect from them in the future. What unique problems should we be especially sensitive to?

Senator HUMPHREY. The fact is that where there has been high level concern on the part of this Government, we have secured, exfiltrated those requesting asylum. The fact is it has been done in tiny numbers, and on an ad hoc basis, but the fact is it has been done. It has been done. It can be done.

Obviously there is some sensitivity. Certain parties would like to keep it as discreet as possible, and that is perfectly do-able, to keep it discreet.

Representative FEIGHAN. I know that this is a tough issue to explore, too publicly, but in terms of Pakistani cooperation, should the United States bring more pressure to bear? Are we sending strong enough signals of our own determination?

Sen. HUMPHREY. Frankly, my finding is that we have not expressed ourselves firmly enough about our humanitarian responsibility. I would simply say again that where a sufficiently well expressed statement has been made, it works. We have done it. It can be done again.

Representative FEIGHAN. Thank you very much.

Representative RICHARDSON. I thank my colleague, Senator Humphrey. I hope you will join us here with the Commissioners.

Senator HUMPHREY. Thank you.

Representative RICHARDSON. Ms. Thorne, I understand you will be part of our second panel.

Ms. THORNE. Yes.

Representative RICHARDSON. In fact, an essential element of the second panel.

So I would like to now proceed with having Mr. Igor Kovalchuk please step up and Sergei Busov. We would like to welcome these two witnesses to the Helsinki Commission.

I understand that, Ludmilla, you will proceed with reading a portion of their opening statements. I do not know if we will have a general vote. It seems that we are convening at 11 o'clock today on the floor of the House when I thought we were convening at 2 o'clock. So if we have to interrupt to go ahead and vote, I hope that the two gentlemen will understand what the problem is.

Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF IGOR KOVALCHUK

Mr. KOVALCHUK. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you for inviting me here today and for giving me the opportunity to share with you some of my experiences in Afghanistan as a Soviet soldier.

My name is Igor Kovalchuk. I was born 27 years ago in Kharkov. I grew up in the Soviet Union like all other children and started going to school at age seven. I was taught to believe that our system was the best and the most humane in the entire world, while Americans were egotistical exploiters of other people, who want to take over the world and keep it in their own hands.

Ms. THORNE [interposing]. Mr. Chairman, may I read on because I can do it quicker, and then you will have more time to ask questions?

Mr. RICHARDSON. Please proceed.

Ms. THORNE. But I must say that Igor and Sergei wrote the testimony themselves, and I translated everything as they wrote it in Russian [reading]:

The years passed quickly, and soon I became a young man. My world outlook was beginning to take form. Ideas and concepts came to mind, and like other young people, I started to make plans for the future.

I graduated from 10-year School No. 90 in Kharkov and later received my passport. I became an electrician, and started working at an aviation factory. The days and months flew by very quickly.

During the daytime I devoted my efforts to my work, and in the evenings I was writing poetry and doing practice shooting. After 2 years, the strong arm of the regime cut into my life. It tore apart the monotone color of my existence and dispatched me into the ranks of the military forces.

At the draft board there were 160 of us. We were all athletic young men, and each of us had a special interest in sharpshooting. In this specially selected group, Unit No. 280, I was number 120.

In the spring of 1980, after saying goodbye to my parents, my sister, and my friends, I left my beloved city, having taken with me my memories, my love of poetry, and my ability to shoot.

We were transported south, and on the way we entertained ourselves by playing cards and drinking vodka. After 12 days, we were brought to a small, dusty village by the name of Kyzil-Arvat, in Turkmenistan, where the Red Banner Guards Paratroop Regiment was stationed.

In this regiment everything was spic-and-span. The men's boots glistened; their blue berets were placed on their heads at an equal angle; and their observant eyes watched the commander's every move. The word "order" was understood within a second, and every assignment was carried out quickly, accurately, and with confidence.

At the time, we were strangers to these well-trained young men. Then the difficult period of severe physical training had begun. For every 10 new recruits, there were 2 sergeants who taught us everything: how to attack, how to defend ourselves, how to work with bayonets and with our rifle butts, and, of course, how to shoot.

After 2½ months, we took the military oath. We were lined up and told that the party had entrusted us to carryout our international duty in Afghanistan. We were to help the Afghan people in their efforts to preserve the achievements of the April Revolution and to defend these from the bloodthirsty actions of the imperialists, who had entered the territory of our friendly neighbor, Afghanistan, and had placed our southern borders in jeopardy.

Not everyone comprehended these lofty words, and all of us started asking each other, "What actions are they talking about, and what imperialism did they have in mind?"

"Stop your babbling," the leaden voice of the deputy political officer rang out. "If you don't understand, I'll explain it very simply. American mercenaries are on the territory of Afghanistan, and it is our duty to get them out of there. Understand?"

"Understood, sir," our voices exclaimed in unison.

Within the next 2 days we were dispatched in different directions across the expanse of Afghanistan, and we started to carryout our international duty. I was sent to Reconnaissance Company No. 7.

Captain Rudenko looked at me and my fellow soldiers and triumphantly proclaimed:

> Now you have turned to meat, raw meat, designated for vultures. Remember my advice: to survive you must become like wolves or you will die. If you haven't smelled blood, you won't live. If you're not going to learn to run hard, you'll be devoured.

These words imbedded themselves in my mind like the yellow fangs of a wolf. I thought to myself, why is he so angry? What did we do to him? Why did he attack us this way? But within a month I became worse than he.

I felt that I was being sucked into a huge, bloody whirlpool, and I totally lost the ability to think. I simply worked with my bayonet, the rifle butt, and my gun sight, as I was taught. My friend Oleg was killed, and soon after that I lost Vitya. His clear, blue eyes, frozen in death's grasp, have left an indelible scar on my heart. His last words to me were, "You know, we could have spent our lives differently."

I started to lose control over myself. I cried through my tears, as I sprayed the land with gunfire. And that is how I spent 6 months of service in Afghanistan. I became like everyone else. My hands no longer shook as I closed the lids over the eyes of my fallen friends. I smoked dope, and the sweet-sour smell of blood no longer turned my stomach. When I had to shoot someone at short range, I no longer closed my eyes.

In January 1981, I understood the words uttered by Captain Rudenko. I had turned into an experienced wolf, permeated by the smell of sweat and gnawing lice. I was given the rank of a junior sergeant and was assigned to be a gunner on a BRM, an armored personnel carrier used for reconnaissance.

One time we were asked to accompany a group of Soviet artists who were sent to entertain Afghan Communists. I was riding in the personnel carrier with one of the entertainers, a young woman, a singer, and with an ensign. At one moment the vehicle swayed to the side and swerved into the shoulder of the road, where some young Afghan children, all dressed in white, were standing. They were celebrating their annual holiday, Ramadan. Suddenly, the sharp nose of the BRM started to move towards them.

A small boy managed to jump to the side, but a girl of about 12 did not make it, and just before she was hit, I saw her glaring at me with her wide-set, brown eyes. They were looking at me through the viewfinder and left a black and white photograph implanted in my mind.

I screamed, but it was too late. I felt how the left side of our vehicle swayed slightly, and as I looked through the viewfinder, I saw a pile of human flesh. I continued to sit on top of the vehicle and started smoking some hash. I cursed myself. I cursed the ensign, the driver, and everyone else. We were guilty of killing a child, and I knew that my own little sister could have been in her place, or the sister of any one of us.

That is when the first thoughts of escaping entered my mind, but at that time I had not as yet formulated any plans. I distinctly remember one day in the summer of 1981, when the hot sun was beating down, and scraps of newspaper were blowing like tumbleweed across the Afghan soil. It seemed as if all of the people had died out.

At 2:40 a.m., my unit received an urgent radio message from Platoon No. 2 of Reconnaissance Company No. 7, which was a part of Regiment 122. The message was: "Help us guys. We are dying." The alarm was sounded, and we quickly jumped into our vehicles, but when we got there, it was already too late. The Afghan guerrillas crept up on the Soviet platoon at night, removed the guards, and started to cut up our men.

The Soviet soldiers jumped up and started hand-to-hand combat, but they were outnumbered, and we got there too late. And that is how 17 soldiers had died, and for me, that was the last drop.

The Afghan people were dying, and we were dying, and our rulers in the Kremlin did not care. Then I decided for certain that after finishing my 2 years in the army I would leave, if I would remain alive.

In December 1981, I was transferred to Kunduz, where I wrote my last short letter home. I collected all of my ammunition, and I

thought that this would be the 17th and my last operation. But my escape attempt failed, and I had lost. In March 1982, I found myself in military prison in Kunduz, along with another Soviet soldier who had tried to escape with me. Both of us were severely beaten. My friend had his head bashed in with a wooden hammer, and my left arm was cut with razor blades, after which two electric cords attached to a 24-volt battery were stuck into my bleeding wounds.

The major of the special department who was interrogating me could not understand how I dared to cross over to the side of the Afghan insurgents. I was very brief and clear in my answer, telling him "that I did not want to be a toy, and that I did not meet a single American in Afghanistan. I would rather be a traitor in your eyes," I told the major, "but in God's eyes and that of my friends, I am not a traitor."

On June 31, 1982, I managed to carryout my 18th and my truly last operation. It was a dash for freedom. And I had won, praise the Lord.

When I was still in the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, I never knew what it was like to be caught in a bombing raid, but when I was with the Afghan resistance near Kabul, I witnessed a helicopter attack. All of the people ran out of their homes and started hiding in the ravines. MIG 24's tore down from the skies and poured lead on the Afghan village. Many people started to fall to the ground, bleeding profusely. Houses began to fall apart. Straw was burning. Tree branches began to bristle. Farm animals were dying. Everything was moaning, crying, and burning. I was sitting by a small stream in a ravine as pieces of shells began to fall into the water with a hissing sound.

Next to me there was an Afghan man of muscular build, who suddenly started screaming and running wildly, totally out of control. As he was running, a bullet flew into his back, tearing his body to shreds.

Sitting next to me was an Afghan woman, who threw back her head as she was praying. She was holding a child who was about 6 years old. The child looked at me with huge, dark eyes and was crying very quietly. He did not even have enough strength to scream. I knew that he was hungry, and I began to shiver, as I remembered the eyes of that little girl and the frozen eyes of my dead comrades. And I damned those who began this dirty war, which has caused such monstrous anguish.

Representative RICHARDSON. Thank you for a very moving statement. Thank you.

Ms. THORNE. Would you like translation made of this?

Representative RICHARDSON. Yes.

Before Sergei starts, let me mention that another distinguished Commissioner has arrived from the other body, our good friend, Senator Lautenberg, who has demonstrated enormous leadership on the whole range of human rights issues.

I had the occasion to travel with him in Eastern Europe, and knowing that he is devoting his energy to this issue, I think, along with Senator Humphrey, your cause or our cause is very well represented.

Let me just welcome the Senator, and please proceed.

Senator LAUTENBERG. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF SERGEI BUSOV

Mr. BUSOV. Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me to discuss with you a problem which has been of great concern to me: the plight of Red army defectors and POW's in Afghanistan.

I myself have shared their fate, and for this reason I would like to tell you about my experiences in Afghanistan and about myself.

My name is Sergei Busov. I was born in 1964 in a small village in the Urals. I started going to school there, but later my family moved to Perm, where I continued my studies.

After completing 8 years of schooling, I entered a technical high school, from which I graduated in the summer of——

Representative RICHARDSON. Mr. Busov, could I suggest that you bring the microphone a little closer to you. Speak right into it so that the people in the back can hear. Move the mike down. That is good.

Mr. BUSOV. I entered the technical high school from which I graduated in the summer of 1982. I became an electrician-welder and started working at a concrete construction factory.

Ms. THORNE [interposing]. I will continue now to make it a little faster, if I might.

Representative RICHARDSON. I must say Mr. Busov's English is very good.

Ms. THORNE. He is a little shy, but if you will help him, I think he will come out of it [begins reading].

On April 2, 1983, I was drafted into the army, and I believe that this was one of the most important days of my life. Beginning with this day, I was immersed into the lowest and cruelest depths of Soviet society, into the army.

Before I was drafted, I used to watch a Soviet television program each Sunday called "I Serve the Soviet Union," and I was extremely impressed by this program. I was delighted by the cleanliness of the barracks, by the bright and spacious rooms, and by the white linen. I wanted to be with those soldiers who were depicted on the screen, and to join them as they were carrying out their orders in a friendly and disciplined manner. On April 2, 1983, I arrived where I wanted to be.

But from the very first days everything was not the way it was shown on television. I thought that things would change when I would be assigned to my training unit, but that did not happen. The training field in the Turkmen SSR, where we were sent, was large, but it was in terrible condition. Our daily life during that military training period was also shabby. Electricity was available only part of the time. The open field served as our bathroom, and in order to washup and to brush our teeth, we had to run 5 kilometers to a canal. Our bedsheets were changed very seldom, and washing was likewise a rare privilege. The baths were also located 5 kilometers from our barracks. We had to wash very quickly, and then, while we were running back along a dusty road, we again got dirty.

The kitchen and dining hall looked like cowsheds, and they were reeking of chlorine. Everything was covered with flies. As a matter of fact, it was totally normal to find a fly in your food, which tasted terrible.

The hot cereal looked like glue. The salty fish that was cooked for us was nauseating, and we were given camel meat. These were our rations.

Everyone was sick with dysentery and hepatitis. The medical facility could not accommodate everyone, and consequently, the sick soldiers were barely treated when they were quickly returned to their units. My dreams of military friendship and discipline were crushed.

After 2 months of military training I was sent to Afghanistan. Our first days there were spent on political indoctrination. Every day they delved into our heads that the imperialists wanted to squelch the April Revolution. We were reminded of our duty to our country, and that we must defend our southern borders.

We were also told about the "dushmans," the American mercenaries, and the American bases, all of which were supposedly teeming in Afghanistan. There was also much talk about the schools and hospitals that Soviet soldiers were building in Afghanistan, but I wondered who was building them and how. After all, you cannot build such structures with tanks.

All of these contradictions were clearly evident. Some soldiers paid no attention to what they were told, while others thought that that was how it is supposed to be. Many Soviet soldiers started taking drugs. I tried to talk myself into believing that everything that was happening was right and that it had to be that way.

I wrote home happy letters, telling my family how great everything was, at the same time that we were forbidden to leave our unit because we were told that we could be killed by the bandits. I did not know anything about these bandits, but I guessed that they were nothing more than the Afghan people.

All of this was extremely difficult for me. I could not accept the lying, the thievery, the servility, and the cruelty. I decided to go into the mountains regardless of what may happen. Thus, I left the Soviet Army on October 25, 1983, after having served in Afghanistan 8 months, driving a food delivery truck in Bagram.

The Afghan guerrillas received me very well, and they did not look at all like the guerrillas that I had seen on Soviet posters, for they were merely peasants, teachers and engineers. They were all united by their striving to be free.

At the beginning it was difficult for me, for I did not speak their language. But with time, we started to understand each other. I saw how difficult everything was for them as well.

The mujahedeen was forced to gain basic military knowledge and to learn the use of military weapons right on the battlefield, and paid for this with their own lives. I decided to help them in whatever way I could, and they accepted what I had offered, although my help was a mere drop in a raging ocean, but it was given sincerely and from the heart.

Thank you.

Representative RICHARDSON. Thank you, Mr. Busov.

The Chair recognizes the distinguished Senator from New Jersey, Senator Lautenberg.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF SENATOR FRANK LAUTENBERG FROM NEW JERSEY

Senator LAUTENBERG. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I unfortunately do not have much time because, as all of us here, we have many things competing.

I did want, if I might, Mr. Chairman, to take 2 minutes to ask some questions of our distinguished visitors and to tell them how proud we are of them for their courage, their independence of spirit.

By the way, do they need translation?

Ms. THORNE. I will translate.

Senator LAUTENBERG. And we are proud of their bravery and for their ability to say, "We are not going to engage in this kind of an activity any longer."

Now that they are living in freedom, I would like to ask if in their reflections they remember how widespread the disillusionment was among the Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan.

Ms. THORNE. Do you want each one to answer?

Senator LAUTENBERG. Yes.

Mr. KOVALCHUK (through Ms. Thorne). Even if this feeling was widespread, this feeling of disillusionment, we could not really openly show our feelings because any time someone could tell on us. Someone could betray us to the so-called Department No. 1.

Although I must say that those regular army soldiers who actually took part in combat operations, who had seen death face-to-face many times and were involved in the killing, for them it was somehow easier to show their feelings, and among themselves there was a great deal of special friendship, comradrie, and these soldiers did more openly sometimes express the feelings of disillusionment.

Mr. BUSOV (through Ms. Thorne). Yes, I believe that the feelings of disillusion are very broad, but there is the KGB everywhere, and we always were aware of this. So most of us just carried this feeling within ourselves.

Senator LAUTENBERG. What about when the soldiers were returning to the Soviet Union from Afghanistan? Did they conceal their true feelings or were they critical in any way?

Ms. THORNE. When they got home?

Senator LAUTENBERG. People who were coming back to the Soviet Union.

Mr. KOVALCHUK. When Soviet lads come home, they usually stick together. They usually start drinking a lot, and usually they are more open with each other. They have, like units, and they trust each other, and they really show their feelings to each other, but they feel the other people as outsiders. So they do not understand them. So they do not show their feeling much with outsiders. They seek out their old friends, who understand directly what they did.

Mr. BUSOV. These are all victims of the war.

Senator LAUTENBERG. Did you hear other friends talk about defecting?

Mr. BUSOV. Initially there were two of us. There was another guy who wanted to defect with me, but then I think he simply became too frightened because none of us knew what was awaiting us,

what the Afghan people were like, how they would treat us. So he just sort of got cold feet, and he did not do it.

Senator LAUTENBERG. What do you hear from friends. and family back in the Soviet Union about Afghanistan? Is the news so suppressed that people really do not know what is going on? Or is there some sense that this is a futile effort, and that the Soviet Union is in the wrong place at the wrong time and ought to withdraw and support the prospects of withdrawal?

Mr. KOVALCHUK. Now after many years, after 8 years of warfare, the people in the Soviet Union for sure are learning what is happening in Afghanistan more and more, and this knowledge is enhanced by the constant arrival of zinc coffins with the dead.

And those mothers who did not lose their sons in Afghanistan, who got their sons back, when the sons came back, dope addicts, who drink a lot, what about these mothers? What about their feelings? They tell others, and these young men also I believe are victims of the war, and someone should try to help them, too.

Senator LAUTENBERG. Does the presence of the KGB and so forth in the Soviet Union keep this disagreement from really erupting and being spoken about freely? Is it fear that keeps this from becoming a subject of continuous review?

Mr. KOVALCHUK. I believe that my mother, my parents, I know that they have friendly relations with other parents who either lost their kids or who are in my situation. Parents who are in the shoes of my mother and father have a tendency to be more open with each other.

But, again, how do you open up these feelings to society as a whole? It is difficult.

Senator LAUTENBERG. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Representative RICHARDSON. I thank the gentleman for coming and for his questions.

I am going to ask the ranking member of the Commission at this hearing to preside. I regrettably have testimony that I have to make immediately. I will have to come back, but I am sure the proceedings will be in good hands with my friend and colleague.

So, Mr. Chairman, please proceed.

Representative RITTER. I thank my good friend from New Mexico and appreciate his participating in this Helsinki hearing and his support for human rights.

I have several questions here about the radio messages that Soviet soldiers receive in Afghanistan.

Do the Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan receive radio messages from the West? In other words, do Soviet soldiers receive non-Soviet radio broadcasts that talk about the conduct of the war?

Ms. THORNE. When they were in the army or when they were with the mujahedeen?

Representative RITTER. When they were in the Red army.

Ms. THORNE. Igor said that many times he tried to catch Western broadcasts, but he was never able to catch them.

Mr. BUSOV. The Soviet radio receivers that we have or that we could have were not equipped to receive these short-wave broadcasts. So I could not get them.

Representative RITTER. Would they be equipped to receive not short-wave, but more local and more regional broadcasts?

I take it the answer then is, no, they have not received any broadcasts while they were in the Red army from non-Soviet sources.

Mr. KOVALCHUK. We were able to catch some Chinese-Russian language broadcasts that were beamed to Afghanistan, but no other.

Ms. THORNE. But both of them believe that the local programs they did catch, the local Afghan programs and so on——

Representative RITTER. They were able to?

Ms. THORNE. Yes.

Representative RITTER. So the receivers would be capable of receiving either powerful broadcasts coming in from China on a particular frequency or a local, regional broadcast; is that correct?

Mr. KOVALCHUK. Also we were able to catch broadcasts from Australia, because geographically, it is probably closer.

Representative RITTER. So the feasibility of radio reception is there?

Mr. KOVALCHUK. Well, it is feasible, but also you have to keep in mind the time difference. Sometimes they broadcast these programs when we are sleeping.

Representative RITTER. The broadcast of Voice of America came when they were sleeping?

Ms. THORNE. He said the Voice of America beamed in at 10 o'clock in the evening. That is when they already had to go to bed.

Representative RITTER. Maybe we could adjust the Voice of America and Radio Liberty broadcasts to the appropriate time? I would like to request that if there is anybody here from the Voice of America that they make an effort to do so.

But beyond that, would you feel that increased radio broadcasts to Soviet troops in Afghanistan, talking about Soviet aggression and atrocities against the Afghan people, about toy bombs and blowing off the hands of children could lead to greater defection? If we made a conscious effort to communicate with Soviet troops using appropriate broadcast facilities in the country, secret facilities of the kind Vladimir Bukovsky was dealing with several years ago, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe or the like; would that lead to increased defection?

Mr. KOVALCHUK. Of course, if soldiers knew, they could do something. But all of us, for example, we thought, well, we will escape. We will make our ways to Pakistan, and there we will reach freedom, but then we learn that the Pakistanis was also a Moslem country, and they also could not give us freedom, but they also would put us in a cell.

Representative RITTER. So if there was knowledge——

Ms. THORNE. Igor says it is very important that such Western broadcasts be aimed not only for the soldiers in Afghanistan, but also at the Afghan people, the Afghan resistance, and the Pakistanis, because in 1980 the Afghans were not taking prisoners. I myself have seen cases where they were just killed and cut up and the bodies were thrown out on the road.

Also, the commander said, "Look what the mujahedeen are doing. They are killing our men."

I think an education program has three directions: for the Soviet soldiers, the mujahedeen, and the Pakistanis, so that all of us can understand together what this problem is all about.

Representative RITTER. And if that were so, would there be substantially increased defections, in your opinion?

Mr. KOVALCHUK. Of course there would, not only soldiers, but officers would start coming. Right now none of us knew the way. None of us had the means. None of us knew how to do it.

Representative RITTER. Some of us—yes?

Mr. BUSOV. Also, it is important for the Red army soldiers to know, who are the mujahedeen and what are they doing? In the Soviet Union we saw placards in which the mujahedeen were presented as evil killers, with knives and machineguns, and we were afraid of them.

We later learned that they were not these cruel killers, but it is important to educate early.

Representative RITTER. In our conduct of U.S. policy in Afghanistan we have not adequately considered available nonviolent means to bring the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan to an end. And now we have the same people who said that the mujahedeen could not handle sophisticated weaponry, telling us that a communications program like this cannot occur. Well, your testimony is very, very helpful.

Should we develop a rigorous, organized effort to help defectors escape from Afghanistan, to come to the West?

Ms. THORNE. Igor says, first of all, of course, if there was a real methodological way of getting out more and more Red army defectors, and Sergei says that in addition, more Soviet guys would volunteer to serve in Afghanistan, knowing that later they could get out.

Representative RITTER. That is fascinating.

Last question. Would Soviet soldiers, having this understanding, having made the decision, having escaped, having come to the West, would they be willing to broadcast back to former comrade Red army soldiers and tell them the truth about Afghanistan?

Mr. KOVALCHUK. Yes, of course.

Representative RITTER. Well, I want to thank you. (Speaking in Russian.)

You are extremely important to our society, and you are extremely important to the conduct of American policy in Afghanistan. Thank you very much.

I recognize my colleague, the leader of this great momentum, Senator Humphrey.

Senator HUMPHREY. I want to note that in the case of Mr. Kovalchuk, he left his unit at the end of June 1982. He did not reach the West until the end of November 1986, more than 4 years later, a wait of more than 4 years, and in the case of Mr. Busov, he left his unit at the end of October 1983 and arrived in the West at the end of November 1986, a period of more than 3 years.

That tells the story. These two concrete cases tell the story which is typical of each and everyone of these defectors, who wait years and years, hoping for asylum and perhaps for some, hoping without hope.

I want to ask each of them what their thoughts were, but let me back up first and ask Ludmilla. On what date did they write letters to the President of the United States asking for asylum?

Ms. THORNE. I remember very well, and I should point out that Igor was further inside Afghanistan than some of the others. I spoke to them at the end of March, and I reached Igor, I believe on April 1, 1986. So the end of March, beginning of April.

Senator HUMPHREY. And I would like to ask each of them what their thoughts were during those 6 or 7 months during which they were waiting for asylum to be granted in response to their request letters.

Ms. THORNE. You mean between March and November?

Senator HUMPHREY. Yes.

Mr. KOVALCHUK. We started feeling total despair to the point that after nothing happened, we asked our mujahedeen commanders, "Take us to Khost," because they were close to Khost, when I interviewed him. "Just let us fight. Let us shoot at this guy. Just let us do anything. Let us be killed, but just let us do something because we're just sitting here." We just couldn't sit there anymore.

Mr. BUSOV. I thought to myself that sooner or later it has got to happen. It has got to happen, but just to make the thought easier, I made myself very busy. At the time I was already actively helping the mujahedeen in the fighting, and this helped relieve some of the tension.

Senator HUMPHREY. Ludmilla, did their writing letters to the President mark the beginning of their quest for asylum, or had they been seeking asylum by some other means? What efforts had they made prior to writing to the President?

Ms. THORNE. No, sir. My meeting with them in 1986 was my second meeting. My first meeting with Igor was in August–September 1983. That was where I first delivered the letters of asylum. That was when I first delivered the photographs. Our administration knew about Igor since the fall of 1983.

Senator HUMPHREY. More than 3 years before.

Ms. THORNE. Exactly, and for 3 years I kept plugging away about Igor. It is just that in 1986 it finally happened.

The same thing happened with Sergei. Sergei and I did not meet in 1983, but we corresponded from 1983 to 1986. So it was a 3-year effort really.

Senator HUMPHREY. Yes. So they were trying for 3 years to secure asylum.

Ms. THORNE. Correct.

Senator HUMPHREY. Even after they directly wrote to the President of the United States.

Ms. THORNE. That was the second attempt. The first time I brought out the letters and photographs in 1983.

Senator HUMPHREY. Perhaps I missed the questioning at this point when I was meeting with some constituents a moment ago. Were Mr. Busov and Mr. Kovalchuk aware of any effort while they were still serving in the Soviet Army or, for that matter, while they were with the resistance; did they hear through any channel of communications, radio or word of mouth or anything, about the willingness of Western countries to grant asylum?

Ms. THORNE. Igor said that one time when he was in combat operations, his major, who was fighting with him, just said to himself how strange it was, that one guy from Moscow who was serving with us escaped and made his way to the mujahedeen, and that he was now actually fighting with the mujahedeen, and that was the first time I heard about somebody defecting and that the guy was not killed.

And my commander also said, "How strange that he was fighting with us and he still was not killed." That is how I learned about it. A natural idea struck my mind. If this guy was not killed, I was going to follow, and I asked to be transferred to Kabul because I thought maybe from there it would be easier for me to make it, too. But that was just a thought that entered my mind.

That was back in 1981, you see, when I was still fighting with the Red army, and the mujahedeen did not know very much about asylum.

Mr. BUSOV. Two other soldiers who were in my unit defected 2 months before me, in August of that year, but I never learned what happened to them, whether they made it or what happened, but two guys in my unit defected 2 months before me.

Senator HUMPHREY. So in the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, there is no awareness that asylum is available to those who defect; is that correct?

Mr. KOVALCHUK. Yes. You see, Nickolay, the other guy, and I defected from Division No. 442, which is a huge division, and we escaped from military prison where we were being held and tortured. After that, 12 officers who were responsible for us, were held responsible and tried, and five soldiers. It is not possible that others did not hear about this going on.

Mr. BUSOV. In my case also, when I defected, my division had 6,000 men, and when I defected, helicopters and tanks started looking for me. They were all informed for whom to look, me. So it is not possible that they did not know because they were all set out to search for me, to find me.

Representative RITTER. If the gentleman would yield, his question was not do people know about running away, but do they know of the possibility of asylum. With the lack of asylum so far, it has been a pretty negative situation for anybody who has defected. And, that is what H. Con. Res. 169 and what these hearings are all about.

Senator HUMPHREY. Indeed, I agree with that. Our performance is sorry, to say the least. We are trying to determine whether there is any awareness or what level of awareness there was in the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, that asylum is available to those who defect.

They are not aware of it or there is some limited awareness or what?

Mr. KOVALCHUK. Well, you see, when Nickolay and I made our escape, maybe it was sort of stupid, but we thought it was all very simple. We thought we could just make our way to Pakistan, to maybe an American base, and it would all be easy.

But we wound up with the mujahedeen, who then held us, and we were like their men. We belonged to them. It was not as easy as we had thought, and the mujahedeen, of course, could do anything

they wanted. They could have killed us. They could have treated us like their pet dogs or whatever.

But it was not like we expected. We thought we could just run to Pakistan, get asylum, and that is it.

Also, the mujahedeen did not know what to do with us either. If they were informed, that, Look. When you get Red army defectors who voluntarily come to you, do this and this and this, it would be good, but they did not know what to do with us either.

Senator HUMPHREY. Yes, I understand.

I have to leave now for a vote which is under way on the Senate side. Thank you, Sergei and Igor. Thank you both for coming.

I am sorry that responsible parties were so slow, shockingly slow, in responding to your request for asylum. I hope that your testimony today will be of help to your comrades who are still in Afghanistan seeking asylum, and that is the purpose of today's hearing, and I believe it has advanced the cause considerably.

Thank you.

Representative RITTER. Thank you, Senator, for your unswerving commitment to the freedom of Afghanistan and, frankly, to those Soviets who serve there unwittingly and unwillingly.

I recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Smith.

Representative SMITH. I thank my good friend, Mr. Ritter, acting chairman of today's hearing.

I, first of all, want to commend our two witnesses, Mr. Kovalchuk and Mr. Busov, for your very compelling testimony. I think that this will give further impetus to swift passage of H. Con. Res. 169 and, more importantly, to a real prioritizing of this issue within the administration.

I think it is shameful, as the Senator from New Hampshire pointed out so well in his opening comments, that we do not have a coherent policy within our own State Department. The fact that you received asylum from Canada after a concerted effort was made, shows that only if a certain amount of pressure and high visibility is brought to bear on this issue, will responsible parties react. It should not be that way.

It is shameful that there are men like yourselves who are willing to seek asylum (in the case of Mr. Busov, I understand you fought with the mujahedeen), and incurred those kinds of risks, and we are not doing our part on this end.

I assure you that we will continue the momentum that this hearing has begun and hope to get further action in this area.

I was very touched, Mr. Kovalchuk, by your comments, especially when you pointed out that after your first attempted escape, when you were being interrogated in the military prison, that you said you were not a traitor in the eyes of your friends, nor in the eyes of God.

Perhaps you could touch on, if you would, how strong, if at all, among your friends, is the belief in God. I believe that often, many of us are willing to take risks for spiritual reasons perhaps even more than for material reasons. How strong is this faith among the Red army?

Mr. KOVALCHUK. It is fascinating. When we were in combat, there were places where we were running and then we had to blow out a door to a hut with our legs and with our feet, and we had to

shoot it out, or we had to open some door. Even the commander for some reason instinctively said, "Good luck and may God be with you."

Somehow despite official efforts to kill religion, somehow, religious beliefs and customs were passed along from my grandmother to my mother to me in the family. Religion still does remain in many families in the Soviet Union.

Representative SMITH. Mr. Kovalchuk, you made an interesting and very important point regarding any hope for real asylum for potential defectors from the Red army when you noted that the resistance has to stop killing Soviet prisoners in order to make that option more viable.

Ms. Thorne, perhaps you would want to answer this question? There was an agreement in 1981 with the International Red Cross (which I understand is no longer in force) to allow for visits to POW's on both sides. Where do we stand with the Red Cross? What efforts are being made to get that kind of protection for POW's on both sides? I believe this would open up more possibilities in the area of asylum.

Ms. THORNE. I should say that the experience of the mujahedeen and human rights activists like myself and others has been rather disappointing with the International Committee of the Red Cross for two reasons. The mujahedeen told me, and I asked this question of many leaders of the various parties, and they all told me that "we no longer wish to cooperate with the Red Cross."

I said why. They said,

> Because they promised us that if we would release some of our Red army soldiers, POW's, to the Red Cross, they would go inside Afghanistan and at least find out what happened to some of our POW's and help secure their release. They did nothing of that. They did nothing for us.

Representative SMITH. Was the attempt made, and did they run into a closed door?

Ms. THORNE. Because the Government did not allow the Red Cross delegation to enter Afghanistan, the Red Cross could do nothing for the mujahedeen POW's. So the mujahedeen told me, and I am speaking from experience,

> Why should we be so stupid? Why should we release our POW's when the Red Cross has done nothing for us, and they have not really made concerted efforts to help with our POW's,

because many of the mujahedeen POW's have been killed on the spot.

So they do not respect the Red Cross for that reason. We, human rights activists, do not approve of the Red Cross because the Red Cross did not give them a choice. They did not tell those 11 Red army POW's in Switzerland, "Look—after 2 years you have a choice. You can either return, or seek asylum in the West." And, of course, some men do want to return. They want to see their parents, and some are even ready to serve prison terms as long as eventually they will see their home.

But they were not informed of a choice. What happened is that in Peshawar all 11 soldiers were forced to sign papers ahead of time saying that "2 years from now I will be ready to repatriate."

When I had a meeting with the Red Cross, I said,

Look. It is like saying 2 years from now I will be ready to be executed. What if a person changes his mind in these 2 years? What can be done to facilitate this change, if they change their mind and ask for political asylum?

That person said, "Well, they can ask for political asylum."

But I told them that there are many Red army soldiers who do not know what asylum is. So the Red Cross did not inform them of their rights, their options. We are not happy about that, and they did not allow any of us to have meetings with these Red army soldiers or even to write them letters, to send them books and magazines. They could receive only certain Soviet published magazines. They were visited during those 2 years only by Soviet officials. So, you see, they were given only one side of the story, one choice. That is why we will not like the Red Cross program.

So unless they do that, I do not think it is a very useful program.

Representative SMITH. Of the 18 Soviet defectors who are apparently in the pipeline——

Ms. THORNE. Unfortunately they are not in the pipeline. They are just on a sheet of paper now.

Representative SMITH. Are they also seeking asylum in other countries, like Canada?

Ms. THORNE. Most of these young men usually gave America as their first choice. It is still, you know, America, the land of dreams. But they also usually say any country that will take us, will be welcomed. I mean anything. Just get us out of this hellhole. Essentially, just get help; get us out.

Some of the pleas were just heartrending. One young man screamed when I was leaving the guerrilla camp. "Ludmilla, take me back to America. I am a Christian." He was screaming; he was crying; I was crying. It was horrendous. Saying goodbye to these young men is probably the most horrible feeling I have at the time.

Representative SMITH. Has any U.N. agency been of assistance to Freedom House?

Ms. THORNE. So far they have not. No. Not that I know of.

Representative SMITH. How about the other human rights organizations, Amnesty International and some of the other groups?

Ms. THORNE. Amnesty has a particular mandate to help prisoners of conscience and it has done a good job in that area. As far as I know, amnesty has not done much. I think they have taken an interest, but not an active one.

Representative SMITH. How about the peace movement? Have they been of any help?

Both Mr. Ritter and I, in Helsinki hearings, have repeatedly raised our disappointment that many of those in the freeze community and the disarmament community say nothing about Afghanistan and about human rights in general.

Ms. THORNE. Emigres have been very supportive in Canada and in the United States. Ukrainian and Russian emigres, the Congress of Russian Americans, which is represented here, have been very supportive. They have sent telegrams, letters. Many Ukrainian groups, such as the Ukrainian Congress Committee. I know, for example, when we became so panicked for this one young man, we told about this dire case, and I know many, many telegrams were sent to the White House pleading to save this young man's life by

both Canadian and Russian emigre organizations. So that is very helpful to us.

Representative RITTER. Would the gentleman yield on that point?

Representative SMITH. I would be happy to yield.

Representative RITTER. At this point or directly following the questions of the gentleman from New Jersey, we could enter into the record, and I would ask that we do enter into the record a letter that was sent to the Commission by the American Latvian Association in the United States, and this points out what Ludmilla is saying about the emigre organizations.

They are fore square behind what we are trying to do here.

Ms. THORNE. Yes, and the Lithuanian Information Center, yesterday, sent a telegram to the White House as well. So it is a community spirit that we share in this country and in Canada, but, of course, we welcome more spirits to be added and fused into our campaign.

Representative RITTER. I yield back to the gentleman.

Representative SMITH. Thank you. One final question, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Busov, it is my understanding that you fought alongside the resistance. Could you tell the Commission how you were treated, how long you served there, and any other particulars you would like to share with us about that experience?

Mr. BUSOV. When I made my way to the mujahedeen, the first time, I did nothing. I tried to orient myself. I wanted to get to know what kind of people they were. I did not speak their language. So I was studying their language. So the first period was just inactive, just a learning process.

After I learned the language a little bit, we got to know each other. I saw the mujahedeen had very great difficulty in treating their wounded, that they did not really know how to go about it, and it was very difficult for them. So I started to help them to treat their wounded. That was my main help.

Then when I witnessed myself and saw how Soviet helicopters and the MIG's were destroying Afghan villages, and how men, women, and children were killed in front of my eyes, my heart screamed out, and I decided myself to pick up arms and help them.

After that I took part in approximately 20 combat operations with the mujahedeen, and I taught them how to use heavy artillery, heavy weapons, which they were not too accustomed to using. At the same time I continued to act as a medical aide with the wounded.

After I and two other Red army defectors who were with me, that is, after all three of us helped the mujahedeen this way, with the fighting and with the medical help, I think this helped the mujahedeen to understand us better. The mujahedeen learned the essence of the Soviet soldier's soul, and they realized that what we were doing in Afghanistan we were not doing of our own volition but because we were ordered to do what we had to do.

Representative SMITH. As a followup, in Mr. Kovalchuk's statement he pointed out that they were very much misled by the army leaders as to what was really going on in Afghanistan. I think you know, Secretary of State George Shultz is meeting with Mr. Shevardnadze today and, I believe, tomorrow.

What would you like the President and Mr. Shevardnadze to know with regards to your visit here today?

And as a footnote. I want you to know that those of us who do support some of the advancements in arms control like the INF Agreement have been very much disappointed that human rights, in general, and specifically Afghanistan, has not been a front-burner issue in these discussions. In a couple of months there will be a summit between Secretary General Gorbachev and President Ronald Reagan, and we intend to bring the Afghanistan issue, particularly this specific issue of asylum, to their attention so that they will hopefully deal with it.

Mr. KOVALCHUK. My message to Mr. Shevardnadze would be: If you have a son, why don't you send him to Afghanistan and you yourself will find out what it is like, what it is like for your son to be there and maybe then you will stop killing and maiming your own young men and the Afghan people? Use your head.

And to Mr. Reagan I would say: Please help all those who are still inside Afghanistan. Help them all gain their freedom, and, Mr. Reagan, I wish that God will give you good health and many years of life.

Mr. BUSOV. I would like to say to Mr. Shevardnadze: Why don't you think a little? Think a little bit about all of the Soviet mothers who have lost their sons in Afghanistan. Think about all of the Soviet vets who come home without arms and legs, maimed. Think about all of the Afghans that have been killed. Think about the Red army defectors and POW's, and think about the 5 million refugees that are teeming in Pakistan and want to go home.

And perhaps he will understand that this war has brought nothing but anguish and suffering and losses to everyone, and that the people are crying.

And to Mr. Reagan I would say: Please, please think about the others who are in my place, in my shoes, who are still there. Some of them are sitting and hoping, and many of them are sitting already without any hope. Please give us hope.

Representative SMITH. Thank you.

Representative RITTER. Thank you very much.

I want to thank you, our witnesses, for your stories, which are so poignant, which are so powerful, which if transmitted back to Soviet red army troops in Afghanistan, would mean more than bombs and bullets.

But I think it is incumbent upon us first to take care of those defectors who need asylum and need it now, and that is a message to our own administration and to the Pakistani Government; that we intend to forcefully pursue this issue in the Helsinki Commission and beyond, in the Congress of the United States.

Thank you, too, Ludmilla, for the incredible, superhuman job that you have done. You are a truly great American, indeed a great citizen of the world.

Thank you all for coming to these hearings.

Ms. THORNE. Thank you very much.

Representative RITTER. The hearing is now considered adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the Commission was adjourned.]

APPENDIX A

MAILGRAM SERVICE CENTER
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Western Union Mailgram

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MR MYKOLA HOVCHAN
827 FLORAL AVENUE
ELIZABETH NJ 07208

THIS IS A CONFIRMATION COPY OF THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE:

FRB TDMT NEW YORK NY 03-09 0637P EST
INT MR DIGO CORDOVEZ, UNITED NATIONS
UNDERSECRETARY GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
PALAIS DES NATIONS
8-10 AVENUE DE LA PAIX
1211 GENEVA 10 (SWITZERLAND)
WE, FORMER SOVIET SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN, WHO NO LONGER WANTED TO TAKE PART IN THE WAR, WELCOME YOUR EFFORTS TO END THIS SENSELESS BLOODSHED. AFTER WAGING AN EXHAUSTING BATTLE FOR 9 YEARS, THE AFGHAN PEOPLE HAVE EARNED THE RIGHT TO LIVE QUIETLY AND TO BE FREE. BUT BEHIND ALL OF THESE TRULY MOMENTEOUS DECISIONS WHICH NOW FACE YOU, THERE IS ONE PROBLEM, WHICH BEARS ON US DIRECTLY, AND HAS GONE BY UNNOTICED: THE FATE OF SOVIET PRISONERS OF WAR AND RED ARMY DEFECTORS IN AFGHANISTAN, OF WHICH THERE ARE SEVERAL HUNDRED. REMEMBERING THE TRAGEDY THAT TOOK PLACE AFTER WORLD WAR II, WHEN COUNTLESS SOVIET CITIZENS WERE FORCIBLY RETURNED TO THE SOVIET UNION, WE FEAR FOR THESE YOUNG MEN. WE BELIEVE THAT EACH OF THEM SHOULD HAVE THE CHOICE OF RETURNING TO THE SOVIET UNION OR GOING TO SOME FREE COUNTRY.

UNITED STATES: MYKOLA HOVCHAN, ALEKSEI PERESLENI, YURI SHAPOVALENKO, SERGEI ZHIGALIN

CANADA: SERGEI BUSOV, IGOR KOVALCHUK, VLADISLAV NAUMOV, VADIM PLOTNIKOV, NIKOLAY GOLOVIN

SWITZERLAND: YURI POVARNITSYN

COL 8-10 1211 10 9

18:34 EST

MGMCOMP

APPENDIX B

DON RITTER
15th District, Pennsylvania
•
ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEES
COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMPETITIVENESS
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND FINANCE
• •
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEES
SCIENCE, RESEARCH, AND TECHNOLOGY
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RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Helsinki Commission Hearing

Soviet Defectors and POWs in Afghanistan

Statement

U.S. Rep. Don Ritter (R-PA)

March 23, 1988, RHOB B318, 10:00 A.M.

I would like to thank Chairman Hoyer for his leadership in calling this hearing regarding Soviet Red Army defectors being held in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Helsinki Commission was the first Congressional body to investigate Soviet actions in Afghanistan and is today continuing that tradition of being out-front on vital humanitarian and security issues.

The condition of Soviet defectors and POWs is indeed grave. The following is a quote from a letter written to President Reagan by Mr. Sergei Busov, a former Red Army deserter who was brought to Canada in November, 1986. It aptly describes the situation of many other Soviet prisoners who are still in Afghanistan:

> We have spent many sleepless, anxious nights together with the Mujahideen . . . . We have shared the last crumbs of bread and the last drops of water . . . . Is it possible that after all of this, my friends and I are destined to live a life of anguish and suffering, without freedom? Can it be, that this is all we deserve?

Now more than ever, it is critical that the United States work to establish a Soviet defector pipeline out of Afghanistan. In doing so, we will increase the pressure on the Soviets to withdraw, and we will bring to freedom hundreds of young men who most likely face punishment or death if they are forced to return to the Soviet Union.

In recent months, Soviet statements have suggested the Soviet problem in Afghanistan – Gorbachev's so-called "bleeding wound" – is in reality an American problem. The Soviets are trying to make the world believe they cannot withdraw from Afghanistan because the United States and others are providing aid to the Mujahideen. This premise is categorically wrong. There is no reason, short of wanting to ensure the continued Soviet domination of Afghanistan, for cutting off U.S. assistance to the resistance or reducing U.S. pressure on the Soviets, until the Soviets have withdrawn. The correct premise for America and the West is: the higher the cost, the sooner the Soviets will leave Afghanistan, not visa versa. Our job now is to increase the pressure and continue to make it more costly for them to stay.

My resolution – H.Con. Res. 169 – introduced earlier in this Congress, calls on the President to establish a program whereby Soviet defectors from Afghanistan, who have come to the West, will be put on the air to tell their former comrades in Afghanistan about Soviet atrocities, why they defected, and how they too could defect. In addition, this resolution calls for a system to bring Soviet Red Army defectors in Afghanistan to the United States, grant them political asylum, and help them to make the transition to American life. The Soviet Defector Pipeline Resolution is cosponsored by a bipartisan group of over 60 House Members.

Having Soviet soldiers defecting in large numbers and telling their stories in the west, will put substantial pressure on the Soviets to withdraw. Short of introducing new or improved weaponry, news of comrade defectors and the availability of asylum in the west, beamed to Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan, is probably the most effective means of increasing the cost of the Afghan war for the Soviets. Imagine the devastation to Soviet soldier's moral as their former comrades condemn the Kremlin's actions in Afghanistan. Vladislav Naumov, a Soviet Red Army defector from Afghanistan who is now living in

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (HELSINKI COMMISSION)
RANKING HOUSE MINORITY MEMBER

over

CHAIRMAN—REPUBLICAN TASK FORCE ON HIGH TECHNOLOGY AND COMPETITIVENESS

Canada, has proven to be a valuable source of information regarding Soviet activities in Afghanistan. In a recent interview he recounted one of his unit's operations.

> We were sent on an operation near the city of Jelalabad. After the Soviet Army finished bombing the forest, we rounded up all the inhabitants of that village into one area. After that, the soldiers came in and started fixing their weapons. They began to terrorize the peaceful people, they would force the people into homes and then throw grenades into their homes. One of the officers ordered a soldier to execute an Afghan man. The soldier refused and put down his weapon. . . . The officer drew his pistol and shot the soldier to death.

Such testimony by Soviet soldiers could further expand and solidify global opposition to the Soviet war against Afghanistan. We need more of these men telling their stories in the West. The Soviets don't take kindly to such publicity, especially now as they seek to enhance their image in the U.S. and elsewhere. Having their own native sons discussing Soviet atrocities against civilian populations, documenting mass-scale genocidal actions, would significantly add to the mounting pressure already brought on by the success of the resistance.

And, while Members of Congress are rallying in support of Soviet defectors, there has been talk the State Department is doing nothing as the Soviets pressure the Mujahideen (directly, and indirectly through Pakistan) into returning Soviet defectors as part of a withdrawal agreement. There are provisions under international law which call for the return of prisoners of war, once hostilities have ended. This law is of course being perverted by the Soviets in their trying to use it to regain control of defectors. We must not allow this to happen. These young men and their families have suffered enough. Yet, in the absence of a strong U.S. voice to the contrary, we could easily see these young men placed in Soviet hands if a withdrawal became imminent.

Even while hostilities continue, a systematic method for screening, processing and transporting Red Army deserters out of Afghanistan could be devised, similar to the program set up by the allies for many Soviet army defectors and prisoners at the end of World War II. It has been estimated by Soviet defectors now living in the west, that there are approximately 250 Soviet POWs currently being held by the Mujahideen. There will be obstacles to creating such a program, but none of these are insurmountable. An "underground railroad" worked during our Civil War. It can work now. This policy is also supported by the Afghan resistance.

After a month-long visit to resistance groups based in Pakistan, Henry Kriegel from the Committee for a Free Afghanistan, reports the resistance would be cooperative. In a letter obtained by Kriegel, the Afghan National Liberation Front writes "If assured proper precautions are taken in the process, the ANLF would support a program of resettlement of Soviet defectors outside Afghanistan within its means. We believe if properly organized such an effort would help both the Afghan resistance and the Soviet defectors" (signed Prof. Sibghatuallah Al-Mojaddedi, Chairman of ANLF).

To those who have argued the establishment of a defector pipeline would be impossible to achieve, that the Soviets would never allow it or that the Pakistanis would be unwilling to go along, I say this is untrue and cowardly. If the United States can supply the Mujahideen with sophisticated military equipment like Stingers, there is no reason to believe that a defector pipeline is beyond the realm of possibility. The Canadian government had established such a rescue operation, through which five Red Army defectors were brought to Canada. Yet, it was halted because of the Canadian government's fear of a Soviet reaction. Apparently they were more concerned about their diplomatic and economic relations with the Soviet Union than with the most basic of human-rights. I would like to think that the priorities of the U.S. government would be different . . . that we would show a little more courage.

Now is the time to establish a free-flowing Soviet defector pipeline. It will increase the cost of the war for the Soviets and it will rescue the many young Soviet defectors of all nationalities, who are crying out for freedom.

I welcome our witnesses and look forward their testimony.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

APPENDIX C

STATEMENT OF SENATOR GORDON J. HUMPHREY
BEFORE THE HELSINKI COMMISSION

MARCH 23, 1988

MR. CHAIRMAN, I COMMEND THE COMMISSION FOR HOLDING THIS EXCEEDINGLY IMPORTANT HEARING. IT IS FAR MORE TIMELY THAN I SUPPOSE YOU MIGHT THINK. SPECIFICALLY, I COMMEND CONGRESSMAN RITTER FOR SPEARHEADING THIS EFFORT OF THE COMMISSION.

I WILL PUT IT BLUNTLY. OUR COUNTRY HAS FAILED MISERABLY TO IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE, ON-GOING PROGRAM TO ACCOMMODATE SOVIET DEFECTORS. IN THE FACE OF HANDWRITTEN PLEAS FOR ASYLUM FROM SOVIET DEFECTORS TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, THIS FAILURE IS SCANDALOUS. IT'S SHOCKING. IT'S SHAMEFUL. IT'S DISGRACEFUL. IT'S TRAGIC. IT S HEARTBREAKING.

WE WHO HAVE STRUGGLED TO SECURE ASYLUM FOR SOVIET SOLDIERS DEFECTING IN AFGHANISTAN HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESSES - TWO OF THEM ARE SITTING IN THIS ROOM. BUT OUR SUCCESSES HAVE BEEN SMALL, AS MEASURED AGAINST THE NEED.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S STATED POLICY ON THE ISSUE OF SOVIET DEFECTORS FROM AFGHANISTAN WAS OUTLINED IN LETTER THAT I RECEIVED FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT LAST WEEK: "SOVIET SOLDIERS WHO HAVE CHOSEN FREEDOM SHOULD BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO LIVE IN A FREE SOCIETY RATHER THAN BE RETURNED AGAINST THEIR WILL TO THE SOVIET UNION. WE THEREFORE WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO REACH THESE DEFECTORS. SHOULD THERE BE A SETTLEMENT OF THE AFGHAN QUESTION, WE WILL DO OUR VERY BEST TO ASSURE THAT SOVIET PRISONERS ARE GIVEN THE CHOICE OF REPATRIATION OR RESETTLEMENT."

MR. CHAIRMAN, THAT STATEMENT IS SHEER HYPOCRISY. WE HAVE NOT EVEN BEGUN TO "MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO REACH THESE DEFECTORS." SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR, THE UNITED STATES HAS ASSISTED IN GRANTING ASYLUM TO ONLY 11 DEFECTORS, AND NOT ONE SINGLE SOVIET DEFECTOR FROM AFGHANISTAN HAS BEEN GRANTED ASYLUM IN THE WEST SINCE NOVEMBER 1986!

I AM PLEASED TO SEE THAT THE COMMISSION HAS INVITED LUDMILLA THORNE OF FREEDOM HOUSE TO TESTIFY THIS MORNING. MS. THORNE HAS SINGLE-HANDEDLY FOUGHT A DETERMINED, COURAGEOUS AND PRINCIPLED BATTLE AGAINST BUREAUCRATIC INERTIA, AND AGAINST THE UNWILLINGNESS OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO DO ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT UPSET MOSCOW, TO SECURE ASYLUM FOR SOVIET DEFECTORS. SHE HAS TRAVELED INSIDE AFGHANISTAN ON FOUR SEPARATE OCCASIONS AND HAS INTERVIEWED 22 SOVIET SOLDIERS IN THE HANDS OF THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE. NINE OF THE SOVIET DEFECTORS THAT HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO THE WEST, OWE THEIR FREEDOM TO THE DEDICATION AND PERSEVERANCE OF MS. THORNE. SHE DESERVES A MEDAL. WERE IT NOT FOR LUDMILLA

THORNE, IN MY VIEW NOT ONE DEFECTOR SEEKING ASYLUM WOULD HAVE BEEN ACCOMMODATED.

WHERE WE HAVE HAD SUCCESSES, THEY HAVE BEEN SECURED UNDER EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES. FOR EXAMPLE, IN MAY OF 1986, LUDMILLA THORNE BROUGHT ME FIVE HAND-WRITTEN LETTERS FROM SOVIET DEFECTORS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. THE LETTERS CONTAINED PLEAS FOR ASYLUM. I SECURED AN APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN AND HANDED HIM THE LETTERS. THE PRESIDENT TOOK A PERSONAL INTEREST, AND SIX MONTHS LATER THE FIVE YOUNG MEN REACHED THE WEST. WE ARE HONORED THIS MORNING BY THE PRESENCE IN THIS ROOM OF TWO OF THE FIVE, SERGEI BUSOV AND IGOR KOVALCHUK.

AS YOU CAN SEE, THEY ARE FINE YOUNG MEN, THEY ARE REAL HUMAN BEINGS. THEY ARE NOT AN ABSTRACTION, THEY ARE REAL, LIVE PEOPLE. THEY ARE NOT SIMPLY NAMES IN A DIPLOMATIC CABLE, THEY ARE FLESH AND BLOOD. AND THERE ARE MANY MORE LIKE THEM SEEKING ASYLUM. OVER THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS, I HAVE PERSONALLY TRANSMITTED THE NAMES OF 18 SOVIET DEFECTORS TO THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF OUR GOVERNMENT. WE KNOW THEM BY NAME, WHERE THEY ARE, AND WHICH GROUP WITHIN THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE IS HOLDING THEM. IN SEVERAL CASES, WE HAVE LETTERS FROM THE RESISTANCE INDICATING THEIR WILLINGNESS TO RELEASE THE MEN. HOWEVER, DESPITE THE URGENCY OF THIS MATTER, THERE HAS BEEN VERY LITTLE PROGRESS TOWARDS GRANTING THEIR REQUEST FOR ASYLUM.

WHY? IT'S NOT BECAUSE THE PRESIDENT DOESN'T CARE. I THINK THE EXPLANATION IS TWOFOLD. FIRST, THE PRESIDENT'S SUBORDINATES ARE SO DISTRACTED BY OTHER EMERGENCIES, THE JOB OF RESCUING SOVIET DEFECTORS SIMPLY DOESN'T GET DONE. SECONDLY, IN MY VIEW, THERE ARE MANY IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT WHO SIMPLY DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING AT THIS JUNCTURE WHICH MIGHT OFFEND THE SOVIETS, AND CLEARLY THE SOVIETS DON'T WANT THE UNITED STATES ACCOMMODATING DEFECTORS. THAT IS MY VIEW. WHATEVER THE CAUSE, THE RESULT IS ABSOLUTELY UNACCEPTABLE. AND TIME IS GROWING SHORT.

THIS IS A FUNDAMENTAL MATTER OF JUSTICE. THESE YOUNG MEN HAVE MADE AN EXTRAORDINARY DECISION THAT INVOLVES GREAT PERSONAL SACRIFICE. IT'S UNLIKELY THEY CAN EVER GO HOME AGAIN. THEY DESERVE AN ACTIVE, AGGRESSIVE EFFORT ON THE PART OF OUR GOVERNMENT TO SECURE THE FREEDOM THEY SEEK.

AT BEST, OVER THE LAST EIGHT YEARS OF THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, WE HAVE ACCOMMODATED ONLY A TRICKLE OF DEFECTORS. THE EFFORT HAS BEEN SPORADIC AND AD HOC. IN EIGHT YEARS THERE HAS BEEN NO INSTITUTIONAL EFFORT TO PROVIDE ASYLUM. WITHOUT THE EXERTIONS OF LUDMILLA THORNE, IN MY VIEW THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO EFFORT BY OUR GOVERNMENT AT ALL. THEREFORE, I URGE THE COMMISSION TO EXAMINE THE SHAMEFUL FAILURE OF OUR GOVERNMENT TO ARRANGE ASYLUM FOR SOVIET DEFECTORS IN AFGHANISTAN. I URGE THE COMMISSION TO CALL FOR

AN IMMEDIATE ACCOUNTING FROM THE INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON SOVIET DEFECTORS.

FURTHERMORE, TODAY, I AM CALLING FOR A GAO INVESTIGATION OF THIS MATTER. AND I URGE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION TO JOIN ME IN THAT REQUEST.

WE HAVE AN EMERGENCY ON OUR HANDS. UNLESS WE SOON ACCOMMODATE THE DEFECTORS, IT IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THEY WILL BECOME PAWNS IN A SETTLMENT OF THE WAR. IT IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THEY WILL BE FORCIBLY REPATRIATED. WHAT A GHASTLY TRAGEDY THAT WOULD BE. WHAT A STAIN ON THE HONOR OF THE UNITED STATES, THAT SUCH A TRAVESTY MIGHT HAPPEN WHEN OFFICIALS AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS ARE AWARE THESE YOUNG MEN ARE PLEADING FOR ASYLUM. GOD FORBID IT.

APPENDIX D

STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE JOHN E. PORTER

BEFORE THE

HELSINKI COMMISSION

ON MARCH 23, 1988

Mr. Chairman, I commend you and the staff of the Helsinki Commission for organizing today's hearing on the plight of Red Army defectors and Prisoners of War (POWs) in Afghanistan. The occupation of Soviet troops in Afghanistan violates the human rights standards shared by members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. We must continue our efforts to focus attention on this prolonged and bloody struggle until fundamental freedoms are restored to the Afghan people, the POWs, and all others engaged in the war against their will.

I am encouraged by the U.N. negotiations which may lead to a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and end the nine-year battle. Last September, I arranged free medical treatment at a hospital in my district for Saylani, an Afghan freedom fighter who lost his eyesight in a bomb blast many years ago. I am very pleased that Saylani will return to the "beginning of the end" of the war.

Soviet Prisoners of War have received little attention in this country. I look forward to the testimony which will be presented by the witnesses appearing before the Commission today, and I apologize if I am unable to stay for the entire hearing. I also want to commend my colleague Don Ritter for introducing H.Con.Res. 169 and bringing this issue to the attention of Congress.

APPENDIX E

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN JACK KEMP
HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING ON SOVIET DEFECTORS IN AFGHANISTAN
MARCH 23, 1988

Mr. Chairman, fellow Members, Senator Humphrey and other witnesses, thank you for participating in this hearing today. It is necessary that the Helsinki Commission hold this hearing on Afghanistan, and tragic that it is necessary.

With Detente II on the horizon, and a great many promises on the table, there are still 115,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan. The mujahadeen in Afghanistan have fought a noble fight to maintain their identity and independence for nearly eight years. The U.S. has assisted their struggle economically and militarily, and it is important that we maintain full aid until we are satisfied that the last vestige of Soviet presence is out of Afghanistan. Now the Soviets say they'll begin to withdraw, but only after we cut off military aid.

The Afghans are fighting for their freedom, and for their national identity. If we cut them off, and they were forced to give up the fight, they would be incorporated into Mother Russia and the Soviet Empire. Armenian and Latvian demonstrations point to the most painful current examples of a nation incorporated against its will, but not the only ones. The Soviet Union must learn that it cannot swallow nations and expect them to accept imposed Soviet domination.

We learned a lot of dark and bitter lessons from World War II. We learned how deeply evil could overtake mens' souls and create a Holocaust. We must always be on the alert to prevent any shadow of that evil to cloud our actions now and in the future.

We don't want another "Operation Keelhaul," another painful lesson of World War II. Stalin was in power then, and he asked for the return of Soviet citizens caught in a war zone. The U.S., believing in Stalin's expressed desire for repatriation of his people, participated in shipping back 100,000 Ukrainians, Serbians, Slavs and other nationalities to the Soviet Union. Many of them had been prisoners of war, non-combatants, or had fought with the Allies. Most of them ended in the Gulag.

We do not want to see this repeated in Afghanistan with Soviet prisoners who may not wish to return to the Soviet Union. The U.S. in its role as guarantor, which it accepted in Geneva in 1985, must insist that there is no involuntary repatriation of Soviet soldiers. We also do not want a repeat of the Medved incident, when a Soviet seaman attempting to defect was turned back to the Soviets.

We should look at Mr. Gorbachev's promise to begin withdrawing troops from Afghanistan in light of the history of Soviet promises. I am delighted that Mr. Gorbachev has made this commitment to withdraw from Afghanistan - just as I was delighted when Mr. Brezhnev signed the Helsinki Final Act in 1976.

But the Soviets have consistently violated their international agreements. They have failed to meet their obligations under Yalta and Helsinki, and misled the world as to their intentions in Operation Keelhaul. I want to be certain that the last Soviet troop is out of Afghanistan and an independent government has been established.

It is important that serious questions be asked at today's hearing about our policy; that we insure full military aid and an independent government; that a verification process be implemented. We must look into our Administration's treatment of Soviet defectors in Afghanistan. We must convince our Administration as well as the Pakistan government that they are endangering the lives of all Afghan refugees and defectors by even considering returning them to Soviet authority.

APPENDIX F

SENATOR ALFONSE D'AMATO

OPENING STATEMENT

HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

ON

SOVIET ARMY DEFECTORS AND POWS FROM AFGHANISTAN

MR. CHAIRMAN:

I WANT TO THANK THE COMMISSION'S DISTINGUISHED CHAIRMAN AND CO-CHAIRMAN FOR SCHEDULING THIS HEARING TO DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF SOVIET PRISONERS OF WAR AND DEFECTORS IN AFGHANISTAN. THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN MAY BE APPROACHING, WITH THE RECENT SOVIET DECLARATION THAT THEY INTEND TO WITHDRAW THEIR FORCES EVEN WITHOUT AN AGREEMENT TO END THE CONFLICT.

HAVING WORKED ON THE ISSUE OF U.S. PRISONERS OF WAR AND MISSING IN ACTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT RESOLUTION OF P.O.W. AND M.I.A. ISSUES CAN BE. THE HISTORY OF SOVIET BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ITS OWN P.O.W.S CREATES A VERY SPECIAL PROBLEM FOR US, ONE WE FACED BEFORE AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II AND HANDLED BADLY.

SOVIET ARMED FORCES HAVE NOT BEEN OPENLY ENGAGED IN WAR SINCE THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THEIR TREATMENT OF SOVIET P.O.W.S WHO RETURNED FROM GERMAN AND JAPANESE CAPTIVITY AT THE END OF THAT WAR IS BEST DESCRIBED AS BARBARIC.

IT IS A HISTORICAL FACT THAT MANY SOVIET P.O.W.S DID NOT WISH TO BE REPATRIATED, BUT THEY WERE FORCIBLY RETURNED TO SOVIET CONTROL BY ALLIED FORCES AT THE END OF THE WAR. WHEN THEY RETURNED, THEY WERE GREETED NOT BY PARADES AND CEREMONIES OF WELCOME, BUT BY STALIN'S N.K.V.D. FIRING SQUADS AND PRISON CAMP GUARDS. THOSE WHO WERE NOT EXECUTED SPENT YEARS AT HARD LABOR IN THE GULAG.

AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II, THE ALLIED POWERS CONDUCTED "OPERATION KEELHAUL" AND "OPERATION EASTWIND," REPATRIATING ALMOST A MILLION SOVIET PRISONERS OF WAR AND SOVIETS WHO HAD DEFECTED TO NAZI GERMANY. MANY OF THE DEFECTORS HAD JOINED -- SOME UNWILLINGLY -- NAZI FORCES AND HAD FOUGHT AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION DURING THE BITTER CAMPAIGNS ON THE EASTERN FRONT.

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV IS NOT JOSEF STALIN AND THE MUJAHIDEEN ARE NOT THE NAZI THIRD REICH, BUT WE ARE TODAY PRESENTED WITH THE SAME MORAL PROBLEM THE ALLIED POWERS FACED AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II. THEN, THEY SOLVED THE PROBLEM BY SHIPPING THE SOVIET P.O.W.S AND DEFECTORS HOME TO FACE A TERRIBLE FATE. THE QUESTION FOR US IS HOW WE RESPOND TO THE SAME PROBLEM ON A MUCH SMALLER SCALE TODAY.

THERE ARE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TIME OF OPERATION KEELHAUL AND TODAY. THE SOVIET UNION IS NOW OUR

ADVERSARY, NOT A WARTIME ALLY. WE DO NOT HOLD SOVIET P.O.W.S, THE AFGHAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS DO. AND THERE IS A CLEAR RECORD IN INTERNATIONAL LAW, MADE AT THE END OF THE KOREAN WAR, THAT P.O.W.S SHOULD NOT BE FORCIBLY RETURNED TO THE AUTHORITY CF THEIR COUNTRY IF THEY DO NOT WANT TO GO.

UNLIKE THE SOVIETS WHO JOINED THE NAZI FORCES, SOVIETS WHO DEFECTED IN AFGHANISTAN WERE COOPERATING WITH A COURAGEOUS PEOPLE STRIVING BY FORCE OF ARMS TO KEEP THEIR FREEDOM. THESE DEFECTORS TOOK ENORMOUS RISKS IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELMING SOVIET FORCES COMMITTED TO THE CONQUEST OF AFGHANISTAN.

NEAR THE END OF WORLD WAR II, WE HAD THE YALTA AGREEMENT. THE YALTA AGREEMENT PROVIDED FOR THE REPATRIATION OF SOVIET CITIZENS, BUT IT SAID NOTHING ABOUT THE USE OF FORCE. ALLIED LEADERS, FEARFUL OF THE TREATMENT THEIR PEOPLE WHO WERE HELD PRISONER BY THE GERMANS MIGHT RECEIVE WHEN THEY FELL INTO THE HANDS OF ADVANCING SOVIET FORCES, AGREED TO REPATRIATE BY FORCE SOVIETS FALLING INTO THREE CATEGORIES: (1) THOSE CAPTURED IN GERMAN UNIFORMS; (2) FORMER MEMBERS OF THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES; AND (3) PERSONS WHO HAD VOLUNTARILY RENDERED AID AND COMFORT TO THE ENEMY.

THE STORY OF THE FORCED REPATRIATION OF THESE PEOPLE IS ONE OF THE DARKER EVENTS IN THE MODERN HISTORY OF THIS

NATION. AT THE END OF THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, THERE MUST BE NO YALTA AGREEMENT. THOSE SOVIET SOLDIERS WHO DON'T WANT TO RETURN TO THE SOVIET UNION MUST NOT BE FORCED TO DO SO BY ANY DIPLOMATIC DEALS.

WE MUST AVOID REPEATING THE MISTAKES THE ALLIES MADE WITH OPERATION KEELHAUL. WE MUST NOT TAKE PART IN ORGANIZING THE UNWILLING REPATRIATION TO SOVIET CONTROL OF SOVIET P.O.W.S AND DEFECTORS HELD IN AFGHANISTAN. WE CANNOT AND MUST NOT SUPPORT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT, EVEN IF IT IS PART OF THE PRICE FOR ENDING SOVIET OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN.

WE HAVE TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT ANY SOVIET P.O.W. WHO WISHES TO LIVE IN FREEDOM IS ABLE TO LEAVE AFGHANISTAN AND REACH THE WEST. WE CANNOT AGAIN BE ACCOMPLICES TO SOVIET FIRING SQUADS AND PRISON CAMP GUARDS.

I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING THE TESTIMONY OF THIS DISTINGUISHED PANEL OF WITNESSES. I BELIEVE THEY WILL GIVE US THE BEST POSSIBLE PERSPECTIVE ON THIS ISSUE.

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN.

APPENDIX G

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN HEINZ

CSCE HEARING ON SOVIET POWS IN AFGHANISTAN

MARCH 23, 1987

Mr. Chairman, thank you for putting together this hearing on a topic few Americans are aware of. Our principal concern on the Helsinki Commission is the pursuit of full compliance with international human rights obligations in Europe. But all of us remember the grim legacy of World War II, of Operation Keelhaul, and the terrible human rights implications of the return of Soviet POWs to the USSR following the Allied victory in 1945.

The numbers of Soviet defectors and POWs as a result of the war in Afghanistan is much smaller than the masses of Soviet soldiers who were repatriated from Allied-occupied areas of Europe following the defeat of Nazi Germany. But in many ways the principle is the same.

We seem to be drawing to some sort of conclusion to the tragic Afghan affair. I still cannot see how the Soviet Union can withdraw from Afghanistan and leave that country with any government based on the discredited communist party. I do

believe that Mikhail Gorbachev wants to leave Afghanistan -- and soon.

There will be many problems left in the wake of a Soviet withdrawal that the world will confront. The enormous suffering of the Afghan people cannot be compensated -- but efforts must be made to heal the scars of 8 years of war. In the midst of this enormous task, we cannot forget the plight of the Soviets whose cases we examine here today. I commend the witnesses for their courage and their determination in helping these Soviet soldiers and averting a repeat of the West's past tragic mistakes in dealing with Soviet military defectors.

QUESTIONS FOR WITNESSES -- CSCE HEARING ON SOVIET DEFECTORS IN AFGHANISTAN

* HAS THE QUESTION OF SOVIET MILITARY DEFECTORS ARISEN IN BILATERAL OR MULTILATERAL DISCUSSIONS OF AFGHANISTAN BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT AND OTHER COUNTRIES? IF IT HAS, HAS IT APPEARED TO REPRESENT AN OBSTACLE FOR SOVIET WITHDRAWAL?

* WHAT INTERNATIONAL PRECEDENTS HAVE BEEN SET BY THE SOVIET MILITARY DEFECTORS CASES? IS THERE A MACHINERY TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM, OR ARE HEROIC INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS THE ONLY THING AVAILABLE? HAS THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE BEEN ADEQUATE TO THE TASK, AND COULD THE ARRANGEMENTS THAT HAVE EVOLVED DEAL WITH MORE SERIOUS SITUATIONS INVOLVING THOUSANDS OF DEFECTORS FROM SOVIET-BLOC OR OTHER COUNTRIES?

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